thoſe of all ranks, profeſſions, and employments, *every one is given to covetouſneſs*, greedy of filthy lucre, all for what they can get, *per fas per nefas*, right or wrong, and this made them *oppreſſive* and *violent*, ver. 6, 7. for of that evil as well as others, the love of money is the bitter root. Nay, and this hardened their hearts againſt the word of God and his prophets; they were the *covetous* Phariſees that *derided* Chriſt, Luke xvi. 14.

3. They were become impudent in ſin, and paſt ſhame. After ſuch a high charge of flagrant crimes proved upon them, it was very proper to ask, *ver.* 15. *Were they aſhamed when they had committed* all theſe *abominations*, which are ſuch a reproach to their reaſon and religion? *Did they bluſh* at the conviction, and acknowledge that confuſion of face belonged to them? If ſo, there is ſome hopes of them yet: But alas! there did not appear ſo much as this *colour of virtue* among them; their hearts were ſo hardened, that *they were not at all aſhamed, neither could they bluſh*, they had ſo brazened their faces. They even gloried in their wickedneſs, and openly confronted the convictions which ſhould have humbled them, and brought them to repentance. They reſolved to *face it out* againſt God himſelf, and not to own their guilt. Some refer it to the *prieſts* and *prophets* that had healed the people ſlightly, and told them they ſhould have peace, and yet were *not aſhamed* of their treachery and falſhood, no, not when the event diſproved them, and gave them the lye: Thoſe that are *ſhameleſs* are *graceleſs*, and their caſe *hopeleſs*. But they that will not ſubmit to a *penitential ſhame*, nor take that to themſelves as their due, ſhall not eſcape an *utter ruin*, for ſo it follows, *therefore they ſhall fall among* them *that fall*, they ſhall have their portion with thoſe that are quite undone; and when God *viſits* the nation in wrath, they ſhall be ſure to be *caſt down*, and be made to *tremble*, becauſe they would not *bluſh*. Note, Thoſe that ſin and cannot bluſh for it, it is ill with them now, and will be worſe with them ſhortly. At firſt they hardened themſelves and *would not* bluſh, afterwards they were ſo hardened that they could not. *Quod unum habebant in malis bonum perdunt, peccandi verecundiam.* Senec. de Vit. Beat.

3. They are put in mind of the good counſel which had been often given them, but in vain. They had a great deal ſaid to them to little purpoſe,

1. By way of advice concerning their duty, *ver.* 16. God had been uſed to ſay to them, *Stand in the ways, and ſee.* That is, (1.) He would have them to *conſider*, not to proceed *raſhly*, but do as travellers in the road, who are in care to find the right way, which will bring them to their journey's end, and therefore pauſe, and enquire for it. If they have any reaſon to think they have miſſed their way, they are not eaſy till they have got ſatisfaction. O that men would be thus *wiſe for their ſouls*, and would ponder the path of their feet, as thoſe that believe *lawful* and *unlawful* are of no leſs conſequence to us, than the right way and the wrong is to a traveller! (2.) He would have them to *conſult* antiquity, the obſervations and experiences of thoſe that went before them, *Ask for the old paths. Enquire of the former age*, Job viii. 8. *Ask thy father, thy elders.* Deut. xxxii. 7. and thou wilt find that the way of godlineſs and righteouſneſs hath always been the way that God hath owned and bleſſed, and in which men have proſpered. Ask for the *old paths*, i. e. the paths preſcribed by the law of God, the written word, that true ſtandard of antiquity. Ask for *the paths* that the patriarchs travelled in before you, Abraham, and Iſaac, and Jacob; and as you hope to inherit the promiſes made to them, tread in their ſteps. Ask for *the old paths, where is the good way?* We muſt not be guided purely by antiquity, as if the plea of preſcription and long uſage were alone ſufficient to juſtify our path; no, there is an *old way, which wicked men have trodden*, Job xxii. 15. But when we ask for the old paths, it is only in order to find out the *good way*, the highway of the upright. Note, The way of religion and godlineſs is a *good old way*; the way that all the ſaints in all ages have walked in. (3.) He would have them to *reſolve* to act according to the reſult of theſe enquiries; when you have found out which is the good way, *walk therein*; practiſe accordingly, keep cloſe to that way, proceed and perſevere in it. Some make this counſel to be given them with reference to the ſtruggles that were between the true and falſe prophets, between thoſe that ſaid they ſhould have peace, and thoſe that told them trouble was at the door; they pretended they knew not which to believe; *Stand in the way*, ſaith God, and ſee, and enquire which of theſe two agrees with the written word, and the uſual methods of God's providence, which of theſe directs you to the good way, and do accordingly. (4.) He aſſures them that if they do thus, it will ſecure the welfare and ſatisfaction of their own ſouls; *walk in the good old way*, and you will find that your walking in that way will be eaſy and pleaſant; you will enjoy both your God and yourſelves; and the way will lead you to true reſt. Though it coſt you ſome pains to walk in that way, you will find an abundant recompence at your journey's end. (5.) He laments it, that this good counſel, which was ſo rational in itſelf, and ſo proper for them, could not find acceptance; *But they ſaid, we will not walk therein.* Not only we will not be at the pains to enquire *which is the good way*, the *good old way*; but when it is told us, and we have nothing to ſay to the contrary, but that it is the right way, yet we will not deny ourſelves and our humours ſo far, as to *walk in it*. Thu multitudes are ruined for ever by downright wilfulneſs.

2. By way of admonition concerning their danger: Becauſe they would not be ruled by fair reaſoning, God takes another method with them; by *leſſer* judgments he threatens *greater*, and ſends his prophets to give them this explication of them, and to frighten them with an apprehenſion of the danger they were in, *ver.* 17. *Alſo I ſet watchmen over you.* God's miniſters are watchmen, and it is a great mercy to have them *ſet over us* in the Lord. Now obſerve here, (1.) The fair warning given by theſe watchmen: This was the burden of their ſong, they cried again and again, *Hearken to the ſound of the trumpet.* God in his providence ſounds the trumpet, *Zech.* viii. 14. The watchmen hear it themſelves, and are affected with it, *Jer.* iv. 19. and they are to call upon others to *hearken* to it too, to *hear the Lord's controverſy*, to obſerve the voice of providence, to improve it, and anſwer the intentions of it. (2.) This fair warning ſlighted; *But they ſaid, we will not hearken*; we will not hear, we will not heed, we will not believe; the prophets may as well ſave themſelves and us the trouble. The reaſon why ſinners periſh is, becauſe they *do not hearken to the ſound of the trumpet*; and the reaſon why they *do not*, is becauſe they *will not*; and they have no reaſon to give *why* they will not, but *becauſe* they will not, that is, they are herein moſt unreaſonable. One may eaſier deal with *ten mens reaſons*, than *one man's will.*

18. ¶ Therefore hear, ye nations, and know, O congregation, what *is* among them. 19. Hear, O earth, behold, I will bring evil upon this people, *even* the fruit of their thoughts, becauſe they have not hearkned unto my words, nor to my law, but rejected it. 20. To what purpoſe cometh there to me incenſe from Sheba? and the ſweet cane from a far country? your burnt-offerings *are* not acceptable, nor your ſacrifices ſweet unto me. 21. Therefore thus ſaith the LORD, Behold, I will lay ſtumbling-blocks before this people, and the fathers and the ſons together ſhall fall upon them: the neighbour and his friend ſhall periſh. 22. Thus ſaith the LORD, Behold, a people cometh from the north-country, and a great nation ſhall be raiſed from the ſides of the earth. 23. They ſhall lay hold on bow and ſpear: they *are* cruel, and have no mercy: their voice roreth like the ſea, and they ride upon horſes, ſet in aray as men for war againſt thee, O daughter of Zion. 24. We have heard the fame thereof: our hands wax feeble: anguiſh hath taken hold of us, *and* pain, as of a woman in travail. 25. Go not forth into the field, nor walk by the way; for the ſword of the enemy, *and* fear *is* on every ſide. 26. ¶ O daughter of my people, gird *thee* with ſackloth, and wallow thy ſelf in aſhes: make thee mourning *as for* an only ſon, moſt bitter lamentation: for the ſpoiler ſhall ſuddenly come upon us. 27. I have ſet thee *for* a tower, *and* a fortreſs among my people, that thou mayſt know and try their way. 28. They are all grievous revolters, walking with ſlanders: *they are* braſs and iron, they are all corrupters. 29. The bellows are burnt, the lead is conſumed of the fire, the founder melteth in vain; for the wicked are not plucked away. 30. Reprobate ſilver ſhall *men* call them, becauſe the LORD hath rejected them.

Here, 1. God appeals to all the neighbours, nay, to the whole world, concerning the equity of his proceedings againſt Judah and Jeruſalem, *ver.* 18, 19. *Hear, ye nations, and know* particularly, *O congregation* of the mighty, the great men of the nations, that take cognizance of the affairs of the ſtates about you, and make remarks upon them. Obſerve now *what* is a doing *among them* of Judah and Jeruſalem; you hear of the deſolations brought upon them, *the earth* rings of it, trembles under it; you all wonder that *I* ſhould *bring evil upon this people*, that are in covenant with me, that profeſs relation to me, that have worſhipped me, and been highly favoured by me; you are ready to ask, *Wherefore has the Lord done thus to this land?* Deut. xxix. 24. Know then, (1.) That it is the *natural product* of their *devices*: The evil brought upon them is the *fruit of their thought*: They *thought* to ſtrengthen themſelves by their alliance with foreigners, and by that very thing they weakned and diminiſhed themſelves, they betrayed and expoſed themſelves. (2.) That it is the *juſt puniſhment* of their diſobedience and rebellion: God doth but execute upon them the curſe of the law for their violation of the commands of it. It is becauſe *they have not hearkened to my words, nor to my law*, nor regarded a word I have ſaid to them, but rejected it all. They ſhould never have been *ruined* thus by the judgments of God's *hand*, but they have refuſed to be *ruled* by the judgments of his mouth: therefore you cannot ſay they have any wrong done them.

2. God rejects their plea, by which they insisted upon their external services as sufficient to atone for all their sins. Alas! it is a frivolous plea, *ver.* 20. *To what purpose comes there to me incense and sweet cane*, to be burned for a perfume on the golden altar, though it was the best of the kind, and far fetched? what care I for *your burnt-offerings* and *your sacrifices?* They not only cannot profit God, so no sacrifice doth, *Psal.* l. 9. but they do not *please* him, for so none doth but the sacrifice of the upright; that of the wicked is an *abomination to him:* Sacrafice and incense were appointed to excite their repentance, and to direct them to a mediator, and assist their faith in him. And where this good use was made of them, *they were acceptable*, God had respect to them, and to those that offered them: But when they were offered with an opinion that thereby they made God their debtor, and purchased a licence to go on in sin, they were so far from being pleasing to God, that they were a provocation to him.

3. He foretels the desolation that was now coming upon them. (1.) God designs their ruin because they hate to be reformed, *ver.* 21. *I will lay stumbling blocks before this people*, occasions of falling not into sin, but into trouble: Those whom God has marked for destruction, he perplexeth and embarrasseth their counsels, and obstructs and retards all the methods they take for their own safety. The parties of the enemy which they met with, wherever they went, were *stumbling blocks* to them, in every corner they stumbled upon them, and were dashed to pieces by them: *The fathers and the sons together shall fall upon them*, neither the fathers with their wisdom, nor the sons with their strength and courage shall escape them, or get over them: The sons that sinned with their fathers fall with them. Even the *neighbour and his friend shall perish*, and not be able to help either themselves or one another. (2.) He will make use of the Chaldeans as instruments of it; for whatever work God has to do, he will find out proper instruments for the doing of it. This is a people fetched *from the north, from the sides of the earth*; Babylon itself lay a great way off northwards; and some of the countries that were subject to the king of Babylon, out of which his army was levied, lay much further. These must be employed in this service, *ver.* 22, 23. For (1.) It is a people very numerous, *a great nation*, which will make their invasion the more formidable. (2.) It is a *warlike* people; *they lay hold on bow and spear*, and at this time know how to use them, for they are used to them; *they ride upon horses*, and therefore they march the more swiftly, and in battle press the harder. No nation had yet brought into the field a better cavalry than the Chaldeans. (3.) It is a *barbarous people*; they *are cruel and have no mercy*, being greedy of prey, and flushed with victory: They take a pride in frightning all about them, their voice *roars like the sea.* And lastly, they have a particular design upon Judah and Jerusalem, in hopes greatly to enrich themselves with the spoil of that famous country: They are *set in aray against thee, O daughter of Zion.* The sins of God's professing people make them an easy prey to those that are God's enemies as well as theirs.

4. He describes the very great consternation which Judah and Jerusalem should be in upon the approach of this formidable enemy, *ver.* 24, 25, 26. (1.) They own themselves in a fright upon the first intelligence brought them of the approach of the enemy; when *we have but heard the fame thereof, our hands wax feeble*, and we have no heart to make any resistance; *anguish has taken hold of us*, and we are in an extremity of pain presently, like that of *a woman in travail.* Note, Sense of guilt quite dispirits men upon the approach of any threatning trouble: What can they hope to do for themselves that have made God their enemy? (2.) They confine themselves by consent to their houses, not daring to shew their heads abroad, for though they could not but expect that the sword of the enemy would at last find them out there, yet they would rather die tamely and sneakingly there, than run any venture either by fight or flight to help themselves. Thus they say one to another, *Go not forth into the field*, no not to fetch in your provision thence, *nor walk by the way*, dare not to go to church or market, it is at your peril if you do, for the *sword of the enemy*, and the fear of it is *on every side*; the *highways are unoccupied*, as in Jael's time, *Judges* v. 7. Let this mind us when we travel the roads in safety, and there is none to make us afraid, to bless God for our share in the publick tranquillity. (3.) The prophet calls upon them sadly to lament the desolations that were coming upon them. He was himself the lamenting prophet, and called upon his people to join with him in his lamentations. *O daughter of my people*, hear thy God calling thee to weeping and mourning, and answer his call: do not only put on sackloth for a day, but *gird on* for thy constant wear: Do not only put ashes on thy head, but *wallow thy self in ashes:* Put thy self into close mourning, and use all the tokens of bitter lamentation, not forced and for shew only, but with the greatest sincerity, as parents *mourn for an only son*, and think themselves comfortless because they are childless. Thus do thou lament for *the spoiler that suddenly comes upon us:* Though he is not come yet, he is *coming*; the decree is *gone forth*, let us therefore meet the execution of it with an agreeable sadness. As saints may rejoice in hope of God's mercies, though they see them only in the promise, so sinners must mourn for fear of God's judgments, though they see them only in the threatnings.

5. He constitutes the prophet a judge over this people that now stand upon their trial; as *chap.* i. 10. *I have set thee over the nations*; so here, *I have set thee for a tower*, or as a sentinel or a watchman upon a tower *among my people*, as an inspector of their actions, *that thou mayst know and try their way*, ver. 27. Not that God needed any to inform him concerning them; on the contrary, the prophet knew little of them in comparison, but by the Spirit of prophecy: but thus God appeals to the prophet himself, and his own observation concerning their character, that he might be fully satisfied in the equity of God's proceedings against them, and with the more assurance give them warning of the judgments coming. God set him for a tower conspicuous to all, and attacked by many, but made him a *fortress*, a *strong tower*, gave him courage to stem the tide, and bear the shock of their displeasure. They that will be faithful reprovers, have need to be firm as fortresses.

Now in trying their way he will find two things.

1. That they are wretchedly *debauched*, ver. 28. *They are all grievous revolters, revolters of revolters.* so the word is, the worst of revolters, as a *servant of servants* is the meanest servant. They have a *revolting heart*, have *deeply* revolted, and revolt *more and more.* They have seemed to *start fair*, but they revolt and *start back:* They *walk with slanders*, they make nothing of belying and backbiting one another; nay, they make a perfect trade of it, it is their constant course: and they *govern themselves* by the slanders they hear, hating those that they hear ill spoken of, though never so unjustly. They are *brass and iron*, base metals, and there is nothing in them that is valuable: They were as *silver* and *gold*, but they are degenerated. Nay, as they are *all revolters*, so *they are all corrupters*, not only debauched themselves, but industrious to *debauch* others, to corrupt them as they themselves are corrupt; nay, to make them seven times more the children of hell than themselves. It is often so, sinners soon become tempters.

2. That they would never be *reclaimed* and *reformed*; it was in vain to think of reducing them, for various methods had been tried with them, and all to no purpose. *ver.* 29, 30. He compares them to ore that was supposed to have some good metal in it, and was therefore put into the furnace by the Refiner, who used all his art, and took abundance of pains about it, but it proved all dross, nothing of any value could be extracted out of it. God by his prophets and by his providences had used the most proper means to refine this people, and to purify them from their wickedness; but it was all in vain: By the continual preaching of the word, and a series of afflictions, they had been kept in a constant fire, but all to no purpose. *The bellows* have been still kept so near the fire to blow it, that they *are burnt* with the heat of it, or they are quite worn out with long use, and thrown into the fire as good for nothing. The prophets have preached their throats sore with *crying aloud* against the sins of Israel, and yet they are not convinced and humbled. The *lead* which was then used in refining silver, as quicksilver is now, *is consumed off the fire*, and has not done its work; for *the founder melteth in vain*, his labour is lost, for *the wicked are not plucked away*, no care is taken to separate between the precious and the vile, to purge out the *old leaven*, to cast out of communion those who being corrupt themselves, are in danger of infecting others. Or, *their wickednesses are not removed*, so some read it, they are still as bad as ever, and nothing will prevail to part between them and their sins; they will not be brought off from their idolatries and immoralities by all they have *heard*, and all they have *felt* of the wrath of God against them. And therefore that doom is passed upon them, *ver.* 30. *Reprobate silver shall they be called*, useless and worthless, they glitter as if they had some silver in them, but there is nothing of real virtue or goodness to be found among them; and for this reason the *Lord has rejected them:* He will no more own them as his people, nor look for any good from them; he will *take them away like dross*, Psal. cxix. 119. and prepare a consuming fire for those that would not be purified by a refining fire. By this it appears, (1.) That God hath no *pleasure in the death* and ruin of sinners, for he tries all ways and methods with them to prevent their destruction, and qualify them for salvation: Both his ordinances and his providences have a tendency this way, to part between them and their sins, and yet with many it is all lost labour, *we have piped unto you, and you have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and you have not wept.* Therefore, (2.) God will be justified in the death of sinners, and all the blame will lie upon themselves. He did not *reject* them till he had used all proper means to reduce them; did not cast them off so long as there was any hopes of them, nor abandon them as dross till it appeared they were *reprobate silver.*

CHAP

CHAP. VII.

The prophet having in God's name reproved the people for their ſins, and given them warning of the judgments of God that were coming upon them, in this chapter proſecutes the ſame intention for their humiliation and awakening. (1.) *He ſhews them the invalidity of the plea they ſo much relied on, that they had the temple of God among them, and conſtantly attended the ſervice of it, and endeavours to take them off from their confidence in their external privileges and performances,* ver. 1—11. (2.) *He minds them of the deſolations of Shiloh; and foretels that ſuch ſhould be the deſolations of Jeruſalem,* ver. 12—16. (3.) *He repreſents to the prophet their abominable idolatries, for which he was thus incenſed againſt them,* ver. 17—20. (4.) *He ſets before the people that fundamental maxim of religion, that to obey is better than ſacrifice,* 1 Sam. xv. 22. *and that God would not accept the ſacrifices of thoſe that obſtinately perſiſted in diſobedience,* ver. 21—28. (5.) *He threatens to lay the land utterly waſte for their idolatry and impiety, and to multiply their ſlain as they had multiplied their ſin,* ver. 29—34.

1. THE word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, ſaying, 2. Stand in the gate of the LORD's houſe, and proclaim there this word, and ſay, Hear the word of the LORD, all *ye of* Judah, that enter in at theſe gates to worſhip the LORD. 3. Thus ſaith the LORD of hoſts the God of Iſrael, Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cauſe you to dwell in this place. 4. Truſt ye not in lying words, ſaying, The temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD *are* theſe. 5. For if ye throughly amend your ways, and your doings; if you throughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour; 6. *If* ye oppreſs not the ſtranger, the fatherleſs, and the widow, and ſhed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt: 7. Then will I cauſe you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers for ever and ever. 8. ¶ Behold, ye truſt in lying words that cannot profit. 9. Will ye ſteal, murder, and commit adultery, and ſwear falſly, and burn incenſe unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; 10. And come and ſtand before me in this houſe, which is called by my name, and ſay, We are delivered to do all theſe abominations? 11. Is this houſe which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? behold, even I have ſeen *it*, ſaith the LORD. 12. But go ye now unto my place which *was* in Shiloh, where I ſet my name at the firſt, and ſee what I did to it, for the wickedneſs of my people Iſrael. 13. And now, becauſe ye have done all theſe works, ſaith the LORD, and I ſpake unto you, riſing up early, and ſpeaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but ye anſwered not: 14. Therefore will I do unto *this* houſe which is called by my name, wherein ye truſt, and unto the place which I gave to you, and to your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh. 15. And I will caſt you out of my ſight, as I have caſt out all your brethren, *even* the whole ſeed of Ephraim.

Theſe verſes begin another ſermon which is continued in this and the two following chapters; much to the ſame effect with thoſe before, to reaſon them to repentance. Obſerve,

1. The orders given to the prophet to preach this ſermon; for he had not only a general commiſſion, but particular directions and inſtructions for every meſſage he delivered. This was *a word* that *came to him from the Lord*, ver. 1. We are not told when this ſermon was to be preached. But are told, (1.) *Where* it muſt be preached, *in the gate of the Lord's houſe*, through which they entred into the outer court, or the *court of the people*. It would affront the prieſts, and expoſe the prophet to their rage, to have ſuch a meſſage as this delivered under their noſes, and within their precincts, but the prophet muſt not fear the face of man, he cannot be faithful to his God if he do. (2.) To whom it muſt be preached, to the men of Judah, that *enter in at theſe gates to worſhip the Lord*; probably it was at one of the three feaſts, when all the males from all parts of the country were to appear before the Lord in the courts of his houſe, and not to *appear empty*: then he had many together to preach to, and that was the moſt ſeaſonable time to admoniſh them not to truſt to their privileges. Note, 1. Even thoſe that do profeſs religion have need to be *preached to*, as well as thoſe that are *without*. 2. It is deſirable to have opportunity of preaching to many together. Wiſdom chuſeth to cry *in the chief place of concourſe*, and as Jeremiah here *in the opening of the gates*, the temple gates. 3. When we are going to worſhip God, we have need to be admoniſhed to *worſhip him in the ſpirit*, and *to have no confidence in the fleſh*, Phil. iii. 3.

2. The contents and ſcope of the ſermon itſelf. It is delivered in the name of *the Lord of hoſts*, the God of Iſrael, who commands the world, but covenants with his people: As creatures we are bound to regard the *Lord of hoſts*, as Chriſtians *the God of Iſrael*; what he ſaid to them he ſaith to us, and it is much the ſame with that which John Baptiſt ſaid to thoſe whom he baptized, *Mat.* iii. 8, 9. *Bring forth fruits meet for repentance*; *And think not to ſay within yourſelves we have Abraham to our father.* The prophet here tells them,

1. What were the *true words* of God which they might *truſt to*. In ſhort, they might depend upon it, that if they would repent and reform their lives, and return to God in a way of duty, he would reſtore and confirm their peace, would redreſs their grievances, and return to them in a way of mercy, *ver.* 4. *Amend your ways and your doings.* This implies that there had been much *amiſs* in their ways and doings, many faults and errors: But it is a great inſtance of the favour of God to them, that he gives them liberty to *amend*, ſhews them where and how they muſt mend, and promiſeth to accept them upon their amendment; *I will cauſe you to dwell* quietly and peaceably *in this place*, and a ſtop ſhall be put to that which threatens your expulſion. Reformation is the only way, and a ſure way to prevent ruin.

He explains himſelf, *ver.* 5, 6, 7. and tells them particularly,

(1.) What the *amendment* was which he *expected* from them. They muſt *throughly* amend, in *making good* they muſt *make good their ways and doings*; they muſt *reform* with *reſolution*, and it muſt be an univerſal conſtant perſevering reformation; not *partial* but *entire*; not *hypocritical* but *ſincere*; not *wavering* but *conſtant*. They muſt *make* the tree *good*, and ſo *make* the fruit *good*; muſt amend their hearts and thoughts, and ſo amend their *ways* and *doings*. In particular, (1.) They muſt be *honeſt* and juſt in all their dealings. *They* that had power in their hands muſt *throughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour* without partiality, and according as the merits of the cauſe appeared: They muſt not either in judgment or in contract *oppreſs the ſtranger, the fatherleſs or the widow*, nor countenance or protect thoſe that did oppreſs, nor refuſe to do them right when they ſought for it: They muſt *not ſhed innocent blood*, and with it defile *this place*, and the land wherein they dwelt. (2.) They muſt keep cloſe to the worſhip of the true God only, *neither walk after other gods*; do not hanker after them, nor hearken to thoſe that would draw you into communion with idolaters; for it is and will be *to your own hurt:* Be not only ſo juſt to your God, but ſo wiſe for yourſelves, as not to throw away your adorations upon thoſe that are not able to help you, and thereby provoke him who is able to deſtroy you. Well, this is all that God inſiſts upon.

(2.) He tells them what the *eſtabliſhment* is which upon this amendment they may expect from him, *ver.* 7. Set about ſuch a work of reformation as this with all ſpeed, go through with it, and abide by it, *And I will cauſe you to dwell in this place*, this temple, it ſhall continue your place of reſort and refuge; the place of your comfortable meeting with God and one another; and you ſhall dwell *in the land that I gave to your fathers for ever and ever*, and ſhall never be turned out either from God's houſe or your own. It is promiſed that they ſhall ſtill enjoy their civil and ſacred privileges; that they ſhall have a *comfortable* enjoyment of them, *I will cauſe you to dwell here*, and thoſe *dwell at eaſe* whom God gives a ſettlement to; they ſhall enjoy it by *covenant*, by virtue of the grant made of it *to their fathers*, not by providence but promiſe. They ſhall *continue* in the enjoyment of it without eviction or moleſtation, they ſhall not be diſturbed, much leſs diſpoſſeſſed *for ever and ever:* nothing but ſin could throw them out. An everlaſting inheritance in the heavenly Canaan is hereby ſecured to all that live in godlineſs and honeſty. And the vulgar Latin reads a further privilege here, *ver.* 3, 7. *Habitabo vobiſcum, I will dwell with you in this place*; and we ſhould find Canaan itſelf but an uncomfortable place to dwell in, if God do not dwell with us there.

2. What were the *lying words* of their own hearts which they muſt not *truſt to?* He *cautions* them againſt this ſelf-deceit, *ver.* 4. *Truſt ye not in lying words*; your are told in what way, and upon what terms you may be eaſy, ſafe and happy; now do not flatter yourſelves with an opinion that you may be ſo on any other terms, or in any other way; yet he chargeth them with this ſelf-deceit, ariſing from a ſelf-conceit, *ver.* 8. *Behold*, it is plain

plain *you* do *truſt in lying words*, notwithſtanding what is ſaid to you; you truſt in *words that cannot profit*; you rely upon a plea that will ſtand you in no ſtead: They that ſlight the words of truth which would profit them, take ſhelter in words of falſhood that cannot profit them. Now theſe lying words were, *The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are theſe.* Theſe buildings, the courts, the holy place, and the holy of holies, are the *temple of the Lord*, built by his appointment, to his glory; here he reſides, here he is worſhipped, here we meet three times a year to pay our homage to him as our king, in his palace. This they thought was ſecurity enough to them to keep God and his favours from leaving them, God and his judgments from breaking in upon them. When the prophets told them how *ſinful* they were, and how *miſerable* they were likely to be ſtill, they appealed to *the temple*; how can we be either ſo or ſo, as long as we have that *holy happy* place among us? The prophet repeats it becauſe they repeated it upon all occaſions. It was the cant of the times, it was in their mouths upon all occaſions: If they heard an awakening ſermon, if any ſtartling piece of news was brought upon them, they lulled themſelves aſleep again with this, we cannot but do well, for we have *the temple of the Lord among us.* Note, the privileges of a *form of godlineſs* are oftentimes the pride and confidence of thoſe that are ſtrangers and enemies to the *power* of it. It is common for thoſe that are *furtheſt from God*, to boaſt themſelves moſt of their being *near to the church.* They are *haughty becauſe of the holy mountain*, Zeph. iii. 11. as if God's mercy were ſo tied to them that they might defy his juſtice.

Now to convince them what a frivolous plea this was, and what little ſtead it would ſtand them in,

1. He ſhews them the groſs abſurdity of it in itſelf. If they knew any thing either of the *temple of the Lord*, or of the *Lord of the temple*, they muſt think that to plead that either in excuſe of their ſin againſt God, or in arreſt of God's judgment againſt them, was the moſt ridiculous unreaſonable thing that could be.

(1.) God is a *holy* God, but this plea made him the patron of ſin, of the worſt of ſins, which even the light of nature condemns, *ver.* 9, 10. What (ſaith he) *will ye ſteal, murther, and commit adultery*, be guilty of the vileſt immoralities, and which the common intereſt, as well as the common ſenſe of mankind witneſs againſt? *Will you ſwear falſly*, a crime which all nations (who with the belief of a God have had a veneration for an oath) have always had a horror of? Will *you burn incenſe to Baal*, a dunghil deity, that ſets up as a rival with the great Jehovah, and not content with that, *will you walk after other gods* too, *whom ye know not*, and by all theſe crimes put a daring affront upon God, both as *the Lord of hoſts*, and the *God of Iſrael?* Will you exchange a God whoſe power and goodneſs you have had ſuch a long experience of, for gods whoſe ability and willingneſs to help you, you know nothing of? And when you have thus done the worſt you can againſt God, will you brazen your faces ſo far as to come and *ſtand before him in this houſe which is called by his name*, and in which his name is called upon. Stand before him as ſervants waiting his commands, as ſupplicants expecting his favour: Will you act in open rebellion againſt him, and yet herd yourſelf among his ſubjects, among the beſt of them? By this it ſhould ſeem you think that either he doth not *diſcover*, or doth not *diſlike* your wicked practices, either of which to imagine is to put the higheſt indignity poſſible upon him. It is as if you ſhould ſay, *we are delivered to do all theſe abominations.* If they had not the front to ſay this, *totidem verbis*, yet their actions ſpoke it aloud. They could not but own, that God, even their own God, had many a time *delivered* them, and been a preſent help to them, when otherwiſe they muſt have periſhed. He in delivering them deſigned to reduce them to himſelf, and by his goodneſs to lead them to repentance; but they reſolved to perſiſt in their *abominations* notwithſtanding; as ſoon as they were delivered, (as of old in the days of the Judges) they *did evil again in the ſight of the Lord*; which was in effect to ſay, in direct contradiction to the true intent and meaning of the providences, which had been concerning them, that God had delivered them to put them again into a capacity of rebelling againſt him, by ſacrificing the more profuſely to their idols. Note, Thoſe who continue in ſin, becauſe grace has abounded, or that grace may abound, do in effect make Chriſt the miniſter of ſin. Some take it thus; you preſent yourſelves before God with your ſacrifices and ſin-offerings, and then ſay, *we are delivered*, i. e. we are diſcharged from our guilt, now it ſhall do us no hurt; when all this is but to blind the world, and ſtop the mouth of conſcience, that you may the more eaſily to yourſelves, and the more plauſibly before others, *do all theſe abominations.*

(2.) His temple was a *holy place*, but this plea made it a *protection* to the moſt unholy perſons: *Is this houſe which is called by my name*, and is a ſtanding ſign of God's kingdom, ſet up among men in oppoſition to the kingdom of ſin and Satan? *Is this become a den of robbers in your eyes?* Do you think it was built to be not only a rendezvous of, but a refuge and ſhelter to the vileſt of malefactors? No, tho' the horns of the altar were a ſanctuary to him that ſlew a man at unawares, yet not to a willful murderer, not to one that doth ought preſumptuouſly, *Exod.* xxi. 14. 1 *Kings* ii. 29. Thoſe that think to excuſe themſelves in unchriſtian practices with the chriſtian name, and ſin the more boldly and ſecurely, becauſe there is a ſin-offering provided, do in effect make God's houſe of prayer a den of thieves; as the prieſts in Chriſt's time, *Mat.* xxi. 13. But could they thus impoſe upon God? No, *Behold I have ſeen it, ſaith the Lord*, have ſeen the real iniquity through the counterfeit and diſſembled piety. Note, Though men may deceive one another with the ſhews of devotion, yet they cannot deceive God.

2. He ſhews them the inſufficiency of this plea adjudged long ſince in the caſe of Shiloh.

1. It is certain Shiloh was ruined, tho' it had God's ſanctuary in it, when by its wickedneſs it profaned that ſanctuary, *ver.* 12. *Go ye now to my place which was in Shiloh*; it is probable the ruins of that once flouriſhing city were yet remaining, however they might read the hiſtory of it, which ought to affect them as if they ſaw the place: there God *ſet his name at the firſt*; there the tabernacle was ſet up when Iſrael firſt took poſſeſſion of Canaan, *Joſh.* xviii. 1. and thither the tribes went up: but thoſe that attended the ſervice of the tabernacle there, corrupted both themſelves and others, and from them aroſe the *wickedneſs of his people Iſrael:* that fountain was poiſoned, and ſent forth malignant ſtreams: and what came of it? go, *ſee what God did to it?* Was it protected by its having the tabernacle in it? No, God *forſook* it, *Pſal.* lxxviii. 60. ſent his ark into captivity, cut off the houſe of Eli that preſided there; and it is very probable the city was quite deſtroyed, for we never read any more of it but as a monument of divine vengeance upon *holy places*, when they harbour *wicked people.* Note, God's judgments upon others that have really revolted from God, while they have kept up a profeſſion of nearneſs to him, ſhould be a warning to us not to *truſt in lying words.* It is good to conſult precedents, and make uſe of them; *Remember Lot's wife*; remember Shiloh and the ſeven churches of Aſia, and know that the *ark* and *candleſtick* are moveable things, *Rev.* ii. 5. *Mat.* xxi. 43.

2. It is as certain that Shiloh's fate will be Jeruſalem's doom, if a ſpeedy and ſincere repentance prevent it not. (1.) Jeruſalem was now as *ſinful* as ever Shiloh was; that is proved by the unerring teſtimony of God himſelf againſt them, *ver.* 13. *Ye have done all theſe works*, you cannot deny it: and they continued *obſtinate* in their ſin; that is proved by the teſtimony of God's meſſengers, by whom he *ſpake unto them*, to return and repent, *riſing up early and ſpeaking*, as one in care, as one in earneſt, as one that would loſe no time in dealing with them; nay that ſhould take the fitteſt opportunity for ſpeaking to them early *in the morning*, when if ever they were ſober, and had their thoughts free and clear: but it was all in vain, God ſpake, but they *heard not*, i. e. they heeded not, they never minded; he *called them*, but they *anſwered not:* they would not come at his call. Note, What God hath *ſpoken to us*, greatly aggravates what we have *done againſt him.*

2. Jeruſalem ſhall ſhortly be as miſerable as ever Shiloh was: *Therefore I will do unto this houſe as I did to Shiloh*, ruin it, and lay it waſte, *ver.* 14. Thoſe that tread in the ſteps of the wickedneſs of thoſe that went before them, muſt expect to fall by the like judgments, for all theſe things *happened to them for enſamples.* The temple at Jeruſalem, tho' never ſo ſtrongly built, if wickedneſs was found in it, would be as unable to keep its ground, and as eaſily conquered as even the *tabernacle* in Shiloh was, when God's day of vengeance was come. This houſe (ſaith God) is *called by my name*, and therefore you may think I ſhould protect it; it is the houſe *in which you truſt*, and you think it will protect you: this land is *the place*, this city *the place which I gave to you and your fathers*, and therefore you are ſecure of the continuance of it, and think nothing can turn you out of it: but the men of Shiloh thus flattered themſelves, and did but deceive themſelves. He quotes another precedent, *ver.* 15. viz. the ruin of the kingdom of the ten tribes, who were the ſeed of Abraham, and had the covenant of circumciſion, and poſſeſſed the land which God gave to them and their fathers, and yet their idolatries threw them out, and extirpated them; and can you think but that the ſame evil courſes ſhould be as fatal to you? Doubtleſs they will be ſo, for God is uniform, and of a piece with himſelf in his judicial proceedings. It is a rule of juſtice, *ut parium par ſit ratio.* You have corrupted *your ſelves as your brethren* the *ſeed of Ephraim* did, and are become their brethren in iniquity, and therefore I will *caſt you out of my ſight, as I have caſt them.* The interpretation here given of the judgment, makes it a terrible one indeed; the caſting of them out of their land ſignified God's caſting them *out of his ſight*, as if he would never *look upon* them, never *look after* them more. Wherever we are caſt it is well enough, if we be kept in the love of God; but if we are thrown out of his favour, our caſe is miſerable tho' we dwell in our own land. This threatning, that God would make this houſe like Shiloh, we ſhall meet with again, and find Jeremiah indicted for it, *chap.* xxvi. 6.

16. Therefore

16. Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me; for I will not hear thee. 17. ¶ Seeſt thou not what they do in the cities of Judah, and in the ſtreets of Jeruſalem? 18. The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead *their* dough to make cakes to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto other gods, that they may provoke me to anger. 19. Do they provoke me to anger? ſaith the LORD: *do they* not *provoke* themſelves to the confuſion of their own faces? 20. Therefore thus ſaith the Lord GOD, Behold, mine anger, and my fury ſhall be poured out upon this place, upon man and upon beaſt, and upon the trees of the field, and upon the fruit of the ground; and it ſhall burn, and ſhall not be quenched.

God had ſhewed them in the foregoing verſes, that the temple, and the ſervice of it, of which they boaſted, and in which they truſted, ſhould not avail to prevent the judgment threatned. But there was another thing which might ſtand them in ſome ſtead, and which yet they had no value for, and that was the *prophet's interceſſion* for them: his prayers would do them more good than their own pleas: now here that ſupport is taken from them; and their caſe is ſad indeed, that have loſt their intereſt in the prayers of God's miniſters and people.

1. God here forbids the prophet to pray for them, *ver.* 16. The decree is gone forth, their ruin is reſolved on, therefore *pray not thou for this people*, i. e. Pray not for the preventing of this judgment threatned, they have *ſinned unto death*, and therefore pray not for their life, but for the life of their ſouls, 1 *John* v. 16. See here, (1.) That God's prophets are *praying* men; Jeremiah foretold the deſtruction of Judah and Jeruſalem, and yet prayed for their preſervation, not knowing that the decree was *abſolute*, and it is the will of God that we *pray for the peace of Jeruſalem*. Even when we threaten ſinners with damnation, we muſt pray for their ſalvation, that they may *turn and live*. Jeremiah was hated, and perſecuted, and reproached by the children of his people, and yet he prayed for them, for it becomes us to render good for evil. (2.) That God's praying prophets have a great intereſt in heaven, how little ſoever they have on earth. When God was determined to deſtroy this people, he beſpeaks the prophet not to pray for them, becauſe he would not have his prayers *to lie*, as prophets prayers ſeldom did, *unanſwered:* God ſaid to Moſes, *Let me alone*, Exod. xxxii. 10. (3.) It is an ill omen to a people, when God reſtrains the ſpirits of his miniſters and people from praying for them, and gives them to ſee their caſe ſo deſperate, that they have no heart to ſpeak a good word for them. (4.) Thoſe that will not regard good miniſters preaching, cannot expect any benefit by their praying. If you will not hear us when we ſpeak *from God to you*, God will not hear us when we ſpeak *to him for you*.

2. He gives him a reaſon for this prohibition. Praying breath is too precious a thing to be loſt and thrown away upon a people hardened in ſin, and marked for ruin.

1. They are reſolved to *perſiſt* in their *rebellion* againſt God, and will not be *turned back* by the prophet's *preaching:* for this he appeals to the prophet himſelf, and his own inſpection and obſervation, *ver.* 17. *Seeſt thou not what they do* openly and publickly, without either ſhame or fear, *in the cities of Judah*, and *in the ſtreets of Jeruſalem:* this intimates both that the ſin was *evident*, and could not be *denied*, and that the ſinners were *impudent*, and would not be *reclaimed*; they committed their wickedneſs even in the prophet's preſence, and under his eye; he ſaw what they did, and yet they did it, which was an affront to his office, and to him whoſe officer he was, and bid defiance to both.

Now obſerve, (1.) What the ſin is with which they are here charged; it is idolatry, *ver.* 18. Their idolatrous reſpects are paid to the *queen of heaven*, the moon, either in an image, or in the original, or both: they worſhipped it probably under the name of Aſhtaroth, or ſome other of their goddeſſes, being in love with *the brightneſs* in which they ſaw the moon walk, and thinking themſelves indebted to her for her benign influences, or fearing her malignant ones; *Job* xxxi. 26. The worſhipping of the moon was much in uſe among the heathen nations, *Jer.* xliv. 17, 19. Some read it the *frame* or *workmanſhip* of heaven; the whole celeſtial globe with all its ornaments and powers, was the object of their adoration. They *worſhipped the hoſt of heaven*, Acts vii. 42. The homage they ſhould have paid to their prince, they paid to the ſtatues that beautified the frontiſpiece of his palace; worſhipped the creatures inſtead of him that made them, the ſervants inſtead of him that commands them, and the gifts inſtead of him that gave them. With the *queen of heaven* they worſhipped *other gods*, images of things not only in *heaven above*, but *in earth beneath*, and *in the waters under the earth*; for thoſe that forſake the *true God*, wander *endleſly* after falſe ones. To theſe deities of their own making they offer *cakes* for meat-offerings, and *pour out drink-offerings*, as if they had their meat and drink from them, and were obliged to make to them their acknowledgments: and ſee how buſy they are, and how every hand is employed in the ſervice of theſe idols, according as they uſed to be employed in their domeſtick ſervices. *The children* were ſent to *gather wood*, *the fathers kindled the fire* to heat the oven, being of the poorer ſort, that could not afford to keep ſervants to do it, yet they would rather do it themſelves than it ſhould be undone; *the women kneaded the dough* with their own hands, for perhaps tho' they had ſervants to do it, yet they took a pride in ſhewing their zeal for their idols by doing it themſelves. Let us be inſtructed even by this bad example in the ſervice of our God. (1.) Let us *honour him with our ſubſtance*, as thoſe that have our ſubſiſtence from him, and eat and drink to the glory of him from whom we have our meat and drink. (2.) Let us not decline the *hardeſt* ſervices, nor diſdain to ſtoop to the *meaneſt*, by which God may be honoured; for *none* ſhall *kindle a fire on God's altar for nought*. Let us think it an honour to be employed in any work for God. (3.) Let us bring up our children in the acts of devotion, let them, as they are capable, be employed in doing ſomething towards the keeping up of religious exerciſes.

(2.) What is the direct tendency of this ſin; It is *that they may provoke me to anger*, they cannot deſign any thing elſe in it: But, *ver.* 19. *Do they provoke me to anger?* Is it becauſe I am hard to be pleaſed, or eaſily provoked? Or am I to bear the blame of the reſentment? No, it is their own doing, they may thank themſelves, and they alone ſhall bear it. *Is it againſt God that they provoke him to wrath?* Is he the worſe for it? Doth it do him any real damage? No, Is *it not againſt themſelves?* to the *confuſion of their own faces?* It is malice againſt God, but it is *impotent* malice, it cannot hurt him; nay, it is *fooliſh* malice, it will hurt *themſelves:* they *ſhew* their ſpite againſt God, but they *do* the ſpite to themſelves. Now canſt thou think any other but that ſuch a people ſhould be abandoned, as are thus deſperately ſet upon their own ruin.

2. God is reſolved to proceed in his *judgments* againſt them, and will not be *turned back* by the prophet's *prayers*, ver. 20. *Thus ſaith the Lord God*, and what he ſaith he will not *unſay*, nor can all the world *gainſay*, hear it therefore and tremble; *Behold, my anger and my fury ſhall be poured out upon this place*, as the flood of waters was upon the old world, or the ſhower of fire and brimſtone upon Sodom, ſince they will anger me, let them ſee what will come of it. They ſhall ſoon find, (1.) That there is no *eſcaping* this deluge of fire, either by *flying* from it, or fencing againſt it: it ſhall be poured out on *this place*, tho' it be a holy place, the Lord's houſe. It ſhall reach both *man and beaſt*, like the plagues of Egypt, and like ſome of them ſhall deſtroy the *trees of the field*, *and the fruit of the ground*, which they had deſigned and *prepared for Baal*, and of which they had made *cakes to the queen of heaven.* (2.) There is no *extinguiſhing* it; it *ſhall burn and ſhall not be quenched*; prayers and tears ſhall then avail nothing; when *his wrath* is *kindled but a little*, much more when it is kindled to ſuch a degree there ſhall be no quenching of it: God's *wrath* is that fire unquenchable, which eternity it ſelf will not ſee the period of, *Depart, ye curſed, into everlaſting fire.*

21. ¶ Thus ſaith the LORD of hoſts the God of Iſrael, Put your burnt-offerings unto your ſacrifices, and eat fleſh. 22. For I ſpake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings or ſacrifices. 23. But this thing commanded I them, ſaying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye ſhall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you. 24. But they hearkned not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counſels *and* in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward. 25. Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day, I have even ſent unto you all my ſervants the prophets, daily riſing up early, and ſending *them*. 26. Yet they hearkned not unto me, nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck, they did worſe than their fathers. 27. Therefore thou ſhalt ſpeak all theſe words unto them, but they will not hearken to thee: thou ſhalt alſo call unto them, but they will not anſwer thee. 28. But thou ſhalt ſay unto them, This *is* a nation, that obeyeth not the voice of the LORD their God, nor receiveth correction: truth is periſhed, and is cut off from their mouth.

God having ſhewed the people that *the temple* would not *protect* them while they polluted it with their wickedneſs, here ſhews them that their *ſacrifices* would not *atone* for them, nor be accepted while they went on in diſobedience. See with what con-

tempt he here ſpeaks of their ceremonial ſervices, *ver.* 21. *Put your burnt-offerings to your ſacrifices*, go on in them as long as you pleaſe; add one ſort of ſacrifice to another; turn your *burnt-offerings*, which were to be wholly burnt to the honour of God, into *peace-offerings*, which the offerer himſelf had a conſiderable ſhare of, that you may *eat fleſh*, for that is all the good you are likely to have from your ſacrifices, a good meal's meat or two; but expect not any other benefit by them while you live at this looſe rate. *Keep your ſacrifices to your ſelves*, (ſo ſome underſtand it) let them be ſerved up at your own tables, for they are no way acceptable at God's altars. For the opening of this,

1. He ſhews them that *obedience* was the only thing he required of them, *ver.* 22, 23. He appeals to the *original contract*, by which they were firſt formed into a people, when they were brought out of Egypt: God made them a *kingdom of prieſts* to himſelf, not that he might be regaled with their ſacrifices, as the devils, whom the heathen worſhipped, which are repreſented as eating with pleaſure the fat of their ſacrifices, and drinking the wine of their drink-offerings, *Deut.* xxxii. 38. No, *Will God eat the fleſh of bulls?* Pſal. l. 13. *I ſpake not to your fathers concerning burnt-offerings or ſacrifices*, not of them *at firſt*. The precepts of the moral law were given before the ceremonial inſtitutions; and thoſe came afterwards as trials of their obedience, and aſſiſtances to their repentance and faith. The Levitical law begins thus, *If any man of you will bring an offering*, he muſt do ſo and ſo, *Lev.* i. 2.—ii. 1. as if it were intended rather to regulate ſacrifice than to *require* it: but that which God commanded, which he bound them to by his ſupreme authority, and which he inſiſted upon as the condition of the covenant, was, *Obey my voice*, ſee *Exod.* xv. 26. where this was the *ſtatute* and *the ordinance* by which God proved them, *Hearken diligently to the voice of the Lord thy God.* And upon theſe terms they ſhall be God's peculiar people, *Exod.* xiv. 5. *If ye will obey my voice indeed.* Make conſcience of the duties of natural religion, obſerve poſitive inſtitutions from a principle of obedience: and then, *I will be your God, and ye ſhall be my people*, which ſpeaks the greateſt honour, happineſs and ſatisfaction that any of the children of men are capable of. Let your converſation be regular, and in every thing ſtudy to comply with the will and word of God; *walk* within the bounds that I have ſet you, and *in all the ways that I have commanded you*, and then you may aſſure your ſelves *it ſhall be well with you.* The demand here is very reaſonable, that we ſhould be directed by infinite wiſdom to that which is fit; that he that made us ſhould command us, and that he ſhould give us law, who gives us our being, and all the ſupports of it. And the promiſe is very encouraging; let God's will be your rule, and his favour ſhall be your felicity.

2. He ſhews them that *diſobedience* was the only thing for which he had a quarrel with them: *He would not reprove them for their ſacrifices*, for the omiſſion of them, they had been *continually before him*, Pſal. l. 8. with them they hoped to bribe God, and purchaſe a licence to go on in ſin. That therefore which God had all along laid to their charge, was breaking his commandments in the courſe of their converſation; while they obſerved them in ſome inſtances in the courſe of their devotion, *ver.* 24, 25, *&c.*

1. They ſet up their own will in competition with the will of God. *They hearkned not* to God, and to his law, they never heeded that, it was to them as if it had never been given, or were of no force; they *inclined not their ear* to attend to it, much leſs their hearts to comply with it. But they would have their own way, would do as they had a mind, and not as they were bidden: *Their own counſels* were their guide, and not the dictates of divine wiſdom; that ſhall be lawful and good with them which they think ſo, tho' the word of God ſaith quite contrary. *The imagination of their evil heart*, the appetites and paſſions of it ſhall be a law to them, and they will walk *in the way* of it, and in the *ſight of their eye.*

2. If they began well, yet they did not proceed, but ſoon flew off. *They went backward*, when they talked of making a captain, and returning to Egypt again, and would not *go forward* under God's conduct. They promiſed fair, *All that the Lord ſhall ſay unto us we will do*; and if they would but have kept in that good mind all had been well; but inſtead of going on in the way of duty, they drew back into the way of ſin, and were worſe than ever.

3. When God ſent to them by *word of mouth* to put them in mind of *the written word*, which was the buſineſs of the prophets, it was all one, ſtill they were *diſobedient.* God had *ſervants* of his among them in every age, *ſince they came out of Egypt* unto this day, ſome or other to tell them of their faults, and put them in mind of their duty, whom he *roſe up early* to ſend, as before, *ver.* 13. as men riſe up early to call ſervants to their work; but they were as deaf to the prophets, as they were to the law, *ver.* 26. *Yet they hearkned not, nor inclined their ear.* This had been their way and manner all along; they were of the ſame ſtubborn refractory diſpoſition with thoſe that went before them: it had all along been the *genius* of the nation, and an *evil genius* it was, that continually *haunted* them till it ruined them at laſt.

4. Their practice and character was ſtill the ſame, they are worſe and not better *than their fathers.*

1. Jeremiah can himſelf witneſs againſt them, that they were diſobedient, or he ſhall ſoon find it ſo, *ver.* 27. *Thou ſhalt ſpeak all theſe words to them*, ſhalt particularly charge them with diſobedience and obſtinacy: but even that will not work upon them, *they will not hearken to thee*, nor heed thee; thou ſhalt go and *call to them* with all the plainneſs and earneſtneſs imaginable, but *they will not anſwer thee*, they will either give thee no anſwer at all, or not an obedient anſwer; they will not come at thy call.

2. He muſt therefore own that they deſerved the character of a *diſobedient people*, that were ripe for deſtruction, and muſt go to them and tell them ſo to their faces, *ver.* 28. *Say unto them, This is a nation that obeys not the voice of the Lord their God*, they are notorious for their obſtinacy; they ſacrifice to the Lord as *their God*, but they will not be ruled by him as *their God*: they will *not receive* either the *inſtruction* of his word, or the correction of his rod, they will not be reclaimed or reformed by either; *truth is periſhed* among them, they cannot receive it, they will not ſubmit to it, nor be governed by it; they will not *ſpeak* truth, there is no believing a word they ſay, for it is *cut off from their mouth*, and lying comes in the room of it; they are falſe both to God and man.

29. ¶ Cut off thine hair, *O Jeruſalem*, and caſt *it* away, and take up a lamentation on high places; for the LORD hath rejected and forſaken the generation of his wrath. 30. For the children of Judah have done evil in my ſight, ſaith the Lord: they have ſet their abominations in the houſe which is called by my name, to pollute it. 31. And they have built the high places of Tophet, which *is* in the valley of the ſon of Hinnom, to burn their ſons and their daughters in the fire, which I commanded *them* not, neither came it into my heart. 32. ¶ Therefore behold, the days come, ſaith the LORD, that it ſhall no more be called Tophet, nor the valley of the ſon of Hinnom, but the valley of ſlaughter: for they ſhall bury in Tophet, till there be no place. 33. And the carcaſes of this people ſhall be meat for the fowls of the heaven, and for the beaſts of the earth, and none ſhall fray *them* away. 34. Then will I cauſe to ceaſe from the cities of Judah, and from the ſtreets of Jeruſalem, the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladneſs, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride: for the land ſhall be deſolate.

Here is, 1. A loud call to weeping and mourning. Jeruſalem, that had been a joyous city, the joy of the whole earth, muſt now *take up a lamentation on high places*, ver. 29. the *high places* where they had ſerved their idols, there muſt they now bemoan their miſery. In token both of ſorrow and ſlavery Jeruſalem muſt now *cut off her hair*, and *caſt it away*, the word is peculiar to the *hair* of the Nazarites, which was the badge and token of their dedication to God, and it is called *their crown.* Jeruſalem had been a city that was a Nazarite to God, but now muſt *cut off her hair*, muſt be profaned, degraded, and ſeparated *from* God, as ſhe had been ſeparated *to* him. And it is time for thoſe that have loſt their holineſs to lay aſide their joy.

2. Juſt cauſe given for this great lamentation.

1. The ſin of Jeruſalem appears here very heinous, no where worſe, or more exceeding ſinful. *The children of Judah*, God's profeſſing people, that *came forth out of the waters of Judah*, *Iſa.* xlviii. 1. have *done evil in my ſight*, under my eye, in my preſence, they have affronted me to my face, which very much aggravates the affront: or, they have done that which they know to be *evil in my ſight*, and in the higheſt degree offenſive to me. Idolatry was the ſin which was above all other ſins evil *in God's ſight.* Now here are two things charged upon them in their idolatry, which were very provoking.

(1.) That they were very *impudent* in it towards God, and ſet him at defiance, *ver.* 30. *They have ſet their abominations*, i. e. their abominable idols, and the altars erected to them, *in the houſe that is called by my name*, in the very courts of the temple *to pollute it*: Manaſſeh did ſo, 2 *Kings* xxi. 7.—xxiii. 12. as if they thought God would connive at it, or cared not though he was never ſo much diſpleaſed with it; or as if they would reconcile heaven and hell, God and Baal. The *heart* is the place which God has choſen to *put his name there*; if ſin have the innermoſt and uppermoſt place there, we pollute the temple of the Lord, and therefore he reſents nothing more than *ſetting up idols in the heart*, Ezek. xiv. 4.

(2.) That they were very *barbarous* in it towards their own children, *ver.* 31. They have particularly *built the high places*

places of Tophet where the image of Moloch was set up, *in the valley of the son of Hinnom*, near adjoining to Jerusalem, and there *they burned their sons and their daughters in the fire*, burned them alive, killed them, and killed them in the most cruel manner imaginable, to honour or appease those idols that were devils and not gods. This was sure the greatest instance that ever was of the power of Satan in the children of disobedience, and of the degeneracy and corruption of the human nature: one would willingly hope there were not many instances of such a barbarous idolatry, but it is amazing there should be any: that men could be so perfectly void of *natural affection*, as to do a thing so inhuman, as to burn little innocent children, and their own too: that they should be so perfectly void of natural *religion*, as to think it *lawful* to do this; nay, to think it acceptable; surely it was in a way of righteous judgment, because they had changed the glory of God into the similitude of a beast, that God gave them up to such vile affections as changed them into worse than beasts. God saith of this, it was *what he commanded them not, neither came it into his heart*; which is not meant of his not commanding them thus to worship Moloch, that is, it was what he had *forbidden* them: but he had never commanded that his worshippers should be at such an expence, nor put such a force upon their natural affection in honouring him: it never came into his heart to have children offered to him, yet they had forsaken his service for the service of such gods, as by commanding this, shewed themselves to be indeed enemies to mankind.

2. The destruction of Jerusalem appears here very terrible: that speaks misery enough in general, *ver.* 29. *The Lord hath rejected and forsaken the generation of his wrath.* Sin makes those the generation of God's wrath, that had been the generation of his love. And God will *reject* and quite *forsake* them, who have thus by their impenitency made themselves *vessels of wrath fitted to destruction.* He will *disown* them for his; verily, I say unto you, I know you not, and he will *give them up* to the terrors of their own guilt, and *leave them* in those hands.

1. *Death* shall *triumph* over them, *ver.* 32, 33. Sin reigns unto death, for that is the wages of it, the end of those things. Tophet, the valley adjoining to Jerusalem, *shall be called the valley of slaughter*, for there multitudes shall be *slain*, when in their sallies out of the city, and their attempts to escape, they fall into the hands of the besiegers. Or, *the valley of slaughtered ones*, because thither the corps of those that are slain shall be brought to be buried, all other burying places being full. And there they shall bury *until there be no more place* to make a grave. This speaks the multitude of those that shall die by the sword, pestilence, and famine; death shall ride on prosperously with a dreadful pomp and power, *conquering and to conquer. The slain of the Lord shall be many.* This valley of Tophet was a place where the citizens of Jerusalem walked to take the air; but it shall now be spoiled for that use, for it shall be so full of graves that there shall be no walking there, because of the danger of contracting a ceremonial pollution by the touch of a grave. There it was that they sacrificed some of their children, and dedicated others to Moloch, and there they should fall as victims to divine justice. Tophet had formerly been the burying place, or burning place of the dead bodies of the *besiegers*, when the Assyrian army was routed by an angel; and for this it was *ordained of old*, Isa. xxx. 33. But they having forgot this mercy, and made it the place of their sin, God will now turn it into a *burying place* for the *besieged.* In allusion to this valley, hell is in the New Testament called Gehenna, the *valley of Hinnom*, for there were buried both the invading Assyrians, and the revolting Jews, so hell is a receptacle after death both for infidels and hypocrites, the open enemies of God's church, and its treacherous friends: it is *the congregation of the dead*; it is prepared for the *generation of God's wrath.* But so great shall that slaughter be, that even the spacious valley of Tophet shall not be able to contain the slain; and at length there shall not be enough left alive to bury the dead, so that *the carcases of this people shall be meat* for the birds and beasts of prey, that shall feed upon them like carrion, and none shall have the concern or courage to *frighten* them *away*, as Rizpah did from the dead bodies of Saul's sons, 2 *Sam.* xxi. 10. This was according to the threatning in the law, and a branch of the curse, *Deut.* xxviii. 26. *Thy carcase shall be meat to the fowls and beasts, and no man shall fray them away.* Thus do the law and the prophets agree, and the execution with both. The decent burying of the dead is a piece of *humanity*, in remembrance of what the dead body hath been, the tabernacle of a reasonable soul. Nay, it is a piece of *divinity*, in expectation of what the dead body *shall be* at the resurrection: the want of it has sometimes been an instance of the rage of men against God's witnesses, *Rev.* xi. 9. Here it is threatned as an instance of the wrath of God against his enemies, and is an intimation, that *evil pursues sinners* even after death.

2. *Joy* shall depart from them, *ver.* 34. *Then will I cause to cease the voice of mirth.* God had *called* by his prophets, and by lesser judgments, *to weeping and mourning*, but they walked contrary to him, and would hear of nothing but *joy* and *gladness*, Isa. xxii. 12, 13. And what came of it? Now God *called to lamentation*, ver. 29. and he made his call *effectual*, leaving them neither cause nor heart for *joy and gladness.* They that will not weep, shall weep; that will not by the grace of God be cured of their *vain mirth*, shall by the justice of God be deprived of *all mirth*: for *when God judgeth, he will overcome.* It is threatned here that there shall be nothing to *rejoice in*; there shall be none of *the joy of weddings*; no *mirth*, for there shall be no *marriages*: the comforts of life shall be abandoned, and all care to keep up mankind upon earth cast off; there shall be none of the voice of *the bridegroom* and the *bride*; no musick, no nuptial songs: nor shall there be any more of the *joy of harvest*, for *the land shall be desolate*, uncultivated and unimproved: both *the cities of Judah*, and the *streets of Jerusalem*, shall look thus melancholy: and when they thus look about them, and see no cause to rejoice, no marvel if they retire into themselves, and find no heart to rejoice. Note, God can soon mar the mirth of the most jovial, and make it to cease, which is a reason why we should always rejoice with trembling; be merry and wise.

CHAP. VIII.

The prophet proceeds in this chapter both to magnify and to justify the destruction that God was bringing upon this people; to shew how grievous it would be, and yet how righteous. (1.) *He represents the judgments coming so very terrible, that death should appear so as most to be dreaded, and yet should be desired*, ver. 1—3. (2.) *He aggravates the wretched stupidity and wilfulness of this people, as that which brought this ruin upon them*, ver. 4—12. (3.) *He describes the great confusion and consternation that the whole land should be in upon the alarm of it*, ver. 13—17. (4.) *The prophet is himself deeply affected with it, and lays it very much to heart*, ver. 18—22.

1. AT that time, saith the LORD, they shall bring out the bones of the kings of Judah, and the bones of his princes, and the bones of the priests, and the bones of the prophets, and the bones of the inhabitants of Jerusalem out of their graves. 2. And they shall spread them before the sun, and the moon, and all the host of heaven whom they have loved, and whom they have served, and after whom they have walked, and whom they have sought, and whom they have worshipped: they shall not be gathered, nor be buried, they shall be for dung upon the face of the earth. 3. And death shall be chosen rather than life, by all the residue of them that remain of this evil family, which remain in all the places whither I have driven them, saith the LORD of hosts.

These verses might fitly have been joined to the close of the foregoing chapter, as giving a further description of the dreadful desolation which the army of the Chaldeans should make in the land. It shall strangely alter the property of death itself, and for the worse too.

1. Death shall not now be, as it always used to be, the *repose of the dead.* When Job makes his court to the grave, it is in hope of this, that *there he shall rest with kings and counsellors of the earth*; but now the ashes of the dead, even of *kings* and *princes*, shall be disturbed, and their *bones scattered at the graves mouth*, Psal. cxli. 7. It was threatned in the close of the former chapter, that the slain should be *unburied*; that might be through neglect, and was not so strange; but here we find the graves of those that were buried, industriously and maliciously *opened* by the victorious enemy; who, either for *covetousness*, in hopes to find treasure in the graves, or for *spite* to the nation, and in a *rage* against it, *brought out the bones of the kings of Judah, and the princes.* The dignity of their sepulchres could not *secure* them, nay, did the more *expose* them to be *rifled*; but it was base and barbarous thus to trample upon royal dust. We will hope the bones of good Josiah were not disturbed, because he piously protected the bones of the man of God, when he burnt the bones of the idolatrous priests, 2 *Kings* xxiii. 18. The bones of the *priests* and *prophets* too were digged up, and thrown about. Some think the false *prophets*, and the

idol *prieſts*, God put this mark of ignominy upon them: but if they were God's prophets and his prieſts, it is what the Pſalmiſt complains of, as the fruit of the outrage of the enemies, *Pſal.* lxxix. 1, 2. Nay, thoſe of the ſpiteful Chaldeans, that could not reach to violate the ſepulchres of princes and prieſts, would rather play at ſmall game than ſit out; and therefore pulled the bones of the ordinary *inhabitants of Jeruſalem out of their graves*. The barbarous nations were ſometimes guilty of theſe abſurd and inhuman triumphs over thoſe they had conquered, and God permitted it here, for a mark of his diſpleaſure againſt the *generation of his wrath*, and for terror to thoſe that ſurvived. The bones being digged out of the graves, were *ſpread* abroad upon the face of the earth in contempt, and to make the reproach the more *ſpreading* and *laſting*. They ſpread them to be *dried*, that they might carry them about in triumph, or might make fuel of them, or make ſome ſuperſtitious uſe of them. They ſhall be ſpread *before the ſun*; for they ſhall not be aſhamed openly to avow the fact at noon day: and before *the moon, and ſtars*, even all the *hoſt of heaven*, whom they have made idols of, *ver.* 2. From the mention of the *ſun, moon and ſtars*, which ſhould be the unconcerned ſpectators of this tragedy, the prophet takes occaſion to ſhew how they had idolized them, and paid thoſe reſpects to them, which they ſhould have paid to God only; that it might be obſerved how little they got by worſhipping the creature, for the creatures they worſhipped, when they were in diſtreſs, ſaw it, but regarded it not, nor gave them any relief; but were rather pleaſed to ſee thoſe *abuſed* in being *vilified*, by whom they had been *abuſed* in being *deified*. See how their reſpects to their idols are inſtanced in and enumerated, to ſhew how we ought to carry it towards our God. (1.) They *loved them*; as amiable beings and bountiful benefactors they eſteemed them, and delighted in them, and therefore did all that follows to them. (2.) They *ſerved them*, did all they could in honour of them, and thought nothing too much they could do; they conformed to all the laws of their ſuperſtition, without diſputing. (3.) They *walked after them*, ſtrove to imitate and reſemble them, according to the characters and accounts of them they had received, which gave riſe and countenance to much of the abominable wickedneſs of the heathen. (4.) They *ſought them*, conſulted them as oracles, appealed to them as judges, implored their favour, and prayed to them as their benefactors. (5.) They *worſhipped them*, gave them divine honour, as having a ſovereign dominion over them. *Before* theſe lights of heaven, whom they had courted, ſhall their dead bodies be caſt, and left to putrefy, and to be *as dung upon the face of the earth*; and the ſun's ſhining upon them will but make them the more noiſome and offenſive. Whatever we make a god of but the true God only, it will ſtand us in no ſtead on the other ſide death and the grave, not for the body, much leſs for the ſoul.

2. Death ſhall now be what it never uſed to be, the *choice of the living*; not becauſe there appears in it any thing delightſome: on the contrary, death never appeared in more horrid frightful ſhapes than now, when they cannot promiſe themſelves either a comfortable death, or a human burial; and yet every thing in this world ſhall become ſo irkſome, and all the proſpects ſo black and diſmal, that *death ſhall be choſen rather than life*, ver. 3. not in a believing hope of happineſs in the other life, but in an utter deſpair of any eaſe in this life. The *nation* is now reduced to a *family*, ſo ſmall is the *reſidue of thoſe that remain* in it; and it is an *evil family*, ſtill as bad as ever, their hearts *unhumbled*, and their luſts *unmortified*: theſe *remain* alive, and that is all, in the many *places whither they were driven* by the judgments of God; ſome priſoners in the country of their *enemies*, others beggars in their *neighbours* country, and others fugitives and vagabonds *there* and in *their own* country. And though thoſe that died, died very miſerably, yet thoſe that ſurvived, and were thus driven out, ſhould live yet more miſerably; ſo that they ſhould *chuſe death* rather than life, and wiſh a thouſand times they had fallen with them that fell by the ſword. Let this cure us of the inordinate love of life, that the caſe may be ſuch, that it may become a burden and terror, and we may be ſtrongly tempted to *chuſe ſtrangling* and death rather.

4. ¶ Moreover, thou ſhalt ſay unto them, Thus ſaith the LORD, Shall they fall and not ariſe? ſhall he turn away, and not return? 5. Why *then* is this people of Jeruſalem ſlidden back, by a perpetual backſliding? they hold faſt deceit, they refuſe to return. 6. I hearkned and heard, *but* they ſpake not aright: no man repented him of his wickedneſs, ſaying, What have I done? every one turned to his courſe, as the horſe ruſheth into the battle. 7. Yea, the ſtork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times, and the turtle, and the crane, and the ſwallow obſerve the time of their coming, but my people know not the judgment of the LORD. 8. How do ye ſay, We *are* wiſe, and the law of the LORD *is* with us? Lo, certainly in vain made he *it*, the pen of the ſcribes *is* in vain. 9. The wiſe *men* are aſhamed, they are diſmayed and taken; Lo, they have rejected the word of the LORD, and what wiſdom *is* in them? 10. Therefore will I give their wives unto others, *and* their fields to them that ſhall inherit *them*: for every one from the leaſt even unto the greateſt is given to covetouſneſs, from the prophet even unto the prieſt every one dealeth falſly. 11. For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people ſlightly, ſaying, Peace, peace, when *there is* no peace. 12. Were they aſhamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all aſhamed, neither could they bluſh: therefore ſhall they fall among them that fall, in the time of their viſitation they ſhall be caſt down, ſaith the LORD.

The prophet here is inſtructed to ſet before this people the folly of their impenitency, which was it that brought this ruin upon them. They are here repreſented as the moſt ſtupid ſenſeleſs people in the world, that would not be made wiſe by all the methods that infinite wiſdom took to bring them to themſelves and their right mind, and ſo to prevent the ruin that was coming upon them.

1. They would not attend to *the dictates of reaſon*; they would not act in the affairs of their ſouls with the ſame common prudence with which they acted in other things. Sinners would become *ſaints*, if they would but ſhew themſelves *men*; and religion would ſoon rule them, if right reaſon might. Obſerve it here; come, and let us reaſon together, ſaith the Lord, *ver.* 4, 5. *Shall men fall, and not ariſe?* If men happen to fall to the ground, to fall into the dirt, will they not get up again as faſt as they can? They are not ſuch fools as to lie ſtill when they are down. Shall *a man turn aſide* out of the right way? Yes, it is poſſible the moſt careful traveller may miſs his way; but then as ſoon as he is aware of it, *will he not return?* Yes certainly, he will with all ſpeed, and will thank him that ſhewed him his miſtake. Thus men do in other things; *why then is this people of Jeruſalem ſlidden back by a perpetual backſliding?* Why do not they, when they are fallen into ſin, haſten to get up again by repentance? Why do not they, when they ſee they have miſſed their way, correct their error, and reform? No man in his wits will go on in a way, that he knows will never bring him to his journey's end; *why then is this people ſlidden back by a perpetual backſliding?* See the nature of ſin, it is a *backſliding*, it is going *back* from the right way; not only into a *by-path*, but into a *contrary path*; *back* from the way that leads to life, to that which leads to utter deſtruction. And this *backſliding*, if almighty grace do not interpoſe to prevent it, will be a *perpetual* backſliding; the ſinner not only wanders *endleſly*, but proceeds *end ways* towards ruin. The ſame ſubtilty of the tempter that brings men to ſin, holds them faſt in it; and they contribute to their own captivity, *they hold faſt deceit*. Sin is a great cheat, and they *hold it faſt*, they love it dearly, and reſolve to ſtick to it, and baffle all the methods God takes to part between them and their ſins. The excuſes they make for their ſins are deceits, and ſo are all their hopes of impunity, yet they hold faſt theſe, and will not be undeceived, and therefore they *refuſe to return*. Note, There is ſome *deceit* or other which thoſe *hold faſt* that go on wilfully in ſinful ways; ſome *lie in their right hand*, by which they *keep hold* of their ſins.

2. They would not attend to *the dictates of conſcience*, which is our *reaſon* reflecting upon *our ſelves* and our own actions, *ver.* 6. Obſerve, (1.) What expectations there were from them, that they would bethink themſelves; *I hearkned and heard*. The prophet liſtned to ſee what effect his preaching had upon them; God himſelf liſtned, as one that deſires not the death of ſinners, that would have been glad to hear any thing that promiſed repentance, that would certainly have heard it, if there had been any thing ſaid of that tendency, and would ſoon have anſwered it with comfort, as he did David when he ſaid, *I will confeſs*, Pſal. xxxii. 5. God *looks upon men*, when they have done amiſs, *Job* xxxiii. 27. to ſee what they will do next; he *hearkens* and *hears*. (2.) How theſe expectations were diſappointed; they *ſpake not aright*, as I thought they would have done. They did not only not *do right*, but not ſo much as *ſpeak right*; God could not get a good word from them, nothing on which to ground any favour to them, or hopes concerning them. There was *none* of them that *ſpake aright*, none that *repented him of his wickedneſs*. Thoſe that have ſinned, then, and then only, *ſpeak aright*, when they ſpeak of repenting; and

it is ſad, when thoſe that have made ſo much *work for repentance*, do not ſay *a word of repenting*. God did not only not find any repenting of the national wickedneſs, and ſo helping to empty the meaſure of publick guilt; but none repented of that particular wickedneſs, which he knew himſelf guilty of. (1.) They did not ſo much as take the firſt ſtep towards repentance; they did not ſo much as ſay, *What have I done?* There was no motion towards it, not the leaſt ſign or token of it. Note, True repentance begins in a ſerious and impartial enquiry into ourſelves, *what we have done*, ariſing from a conviction, that we have done amiſs. (2.) They were ſo far from repenting of their ſins, that they went on reſolutely in their ſins; *Every one turned to his courſe*, his wicked courſe, that courſe of ſin which he had choſen, and accuſtomed himſelf to, *as the horſe ruſheth into the battle*, eager upon action, and ſcorning to be curbed. How the horſe ruſheth into the battle, is elegantly deſcribed, *Job* xxxix. 21, &c. *He mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted.* Thus the daring ſinner laughs at the threatnings of the word as bugbears, and runs violently upon the inſtruments of death and ſlaughter, and nothing will be *reſtrained from him.*

3. They would not attend to the *dictates of providence*, nor underſtand the voice of God in them, *ver.* 7. (1.) It is an inſtance of their ſottiſhneſs, that though they are *God's people*, and therefore ſhould readily underſtand his mind upon every intimation of it, yet they *know not the judgment of the Lord*, they apprehend not the meaning either of a mercy or of an affliction, not how to accommodate themſelves to either, or anſwer God's intention in either. They *know not* how to improve the *ſeaſons of grace* that God affords them, when he ſends them his prophets; nor how to make uſe of the rebukes they are under, when *his voice cries in the city*. They *diſcern not the ſigns of the times*, Matth. xvi. 3. nor are aware how God is dealing with them. They know not that *way of duty*, which God had preſcribed them, though it be written both in their hearts and in their books. (2.) It is an aggravation of their *ſottiſhneſs*, that there is ſo much *ſagacity* in the inferior creatures. *The ſtork in the heaven* knows her appointed times of coming and continuing; ſo do other ſeaſon-birds, *the turtle, the crane, and the ſwallow*; theſe by a natural inſtinct change their quarters, as the temper of the air alters; they come when the ſpring comes, and are gone we know not whither when the winter approacheth; probably into warmer climates, as ſome birds come with winter, and are gone when that is over.

4. They would not attend to the *dictates of the written word*. They ſay, *we are wiſe*, but *how* can they ſay ſo? With what face can they pretend to any thing of wiſdom, when they do not underſtand themſelves ſo well as the brute creatures? Why, truly they think they are wiſe, becauſe *the law of the Lord is with them*, the book of the law and the interpreters of it; and their neighbours, for the ſame reaſon conclude *they are wiſe*, Deut. iv. 6. But their pretenſions are groundleſs for all this, *Lo, certainly in vain made he it*; ſure never any people had bibles to ſo little purpoſe as they have. They had as good have been without the law, unleſs they had made a better uſe of it. God has indeed made it able to make men wiſe to ſalvation, but as to them it is made ſo *in vain*, for they are *never the wiſer* for it; the *pen of the ſcribes*, of thoſe that firſt wrote the law, and of thoſe that now write expoſitions of it, they are *in vain*. Both the favour of their God, and the labour of their ſcribes is loſt upon them; they *receive the grace of God therein in vain*. Note, There are many that enjoy abundance of the means of grace, that have great plenty of bibles and miniſters, but they have them *in vain*; they do not anſwer the end of their having them. But it might be ſaid, they have ſome wiſe men among them, to whom *the law* and the *pen of the ſcribes* is not *in vain*: To this it is anſwered, *ver.* 9. *The wiſe men are aſhamed*, i. e. they have reaſon to be ſo, that they have not made a better uſe of their wiſdom, and lived more up to it; *They are confounded and taken*; all their wiſdom has not ſerved to keep them from thoſe courſes that tend to their ruin: They are *taken* in the ſame ſnares, that others of their neighbours, who have not pretended to ſo much wiſdom, are taken in, and filled with the ſame *confuſion*. Thoſe that have more knowledge than others, and yet do no better than others for their own ſouls, have reaſon to be *aſhamed*. They talk of their wiſdom, but, *Lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord*; they would not be governed by it, would not follow the conduct of it, would not do what they knew, and then *what wiſdom is in them?* None to any purpoſe; none that would be found to their praiſe at the great day, how much ſoever it is found to their pride now.

The pretenders to wiſdom, that ſaid, *we are wiſe*, and the law of the Lord is with us, were *the prieſts* and the *falſe prophets*; with them the prophet here deals plainly.

(1.) He threatens the judgments of God againſt them. Their families and eſtates ſhall be ruined, *ver.* 10. *Their wives ſhall be given to others*, when they are taken captives, and *their fields* ſhall be taken from them by the victorious enemy, and ſhall be given *to thoſe that ſhall inherit them*; not only ſtrip them for once, but take poſſeſſion of them as their own, and acquire a property in them, which they ſhall tranſmit to their poſterity. And, *ver.* 12. notwithſtanding all their pretenſions to wiſdom and ſanctity, *they fall among them that fall*; for *if the blind lead the blind*, both ſhall *fall together* into the ditch. *In the time of their viſitation*, when the wickedneſs of the land comes to be enquired into, it will be found that they have contributed to it more than any, and therefore they ſhall be ſure to be *caſt down*, and caſt out.

(2.) He gives a reaſon for theſe judgments, *ver.* 10, 11, 12. even the ſame account of their badneſs, which we meet with before, *chap.* vi. 13, 14, 15. where it was opened at large. (1.) They were greedy of the wealth of this world; which is bad enough in any, but worſt in *prophets* and *prieſts*, who ſhould be beſt acquainted with another world, and therefore ſhould be moſt dead to this. But theſe from the leaſt to the greateſt were *given to covetouſneſs*; The *prieſts teach for hire*, and the *prophets divine for money*, Mic. iii. 11. (2.) They made no conſcience of ſpeaking truth, no not when they ſpake as prieſts and prophets; *Every one deals falſly*, looks one way and rows another. There is no ſuch thing as ſincerity among them. (3.) They flattered people in their ſins, and ſo flattered them into deſtruction. They pretended to be the phyſicians of the ſtate, but knew not how to apply proper remedies to its growing maladies; they *healed them ſlightly*, killed the patient with palliative cures; ſilencing their fears and complaints with *peace, peace*, all is well, and there is no danger, when the God of heaven was proceeding in his controverſy with them, ſo that there could be *no peace* to them. (4.) When it was made to appear how baſely they prevaricated, they were not at all aſhamed of it, but rather gloried in it, *ver.* 12. *They could not bluſh*, ſo perfectly loſt were they to all ſenſe of virtue and honour; when they were convicted of the groſſeſt forgeries, they would juſtify what they had done, and laugh at thoſe whom they had impoſed upon. Such as theſe were ripe for ruin.

13. ¶ I will ſurely conſume them, ſaith the LORD; *there ſhall be* no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig-tree, and the leaf ſhall fade, and *the things that* I have given them ſhall paſs away from them. 14. Why do we ſit ſtill? aſſemble yourſelves, and let us enter into the defenced cities, and let us be ſilent there: for the LORD our God hath put us to ſilence, and given us water of gall to drink, becauſe we have ſinned againſt the LORD. 15. We looked for peace, but no good *came: and* for a time of health, and behold trouble. 16. The ſnorting of his horſes was heard from Dan: the whole land trembled at the ſound of the neighing of his ſtrong ones, for they are come and have devoured the land, and all that is in it, the city, and thoſe that dwell therein. 17. For behold, I will ſend ſerpents, cockatrices among you, which *will* not *be* charmed, and they ſhall bite you, ſaith the LORD. 18. ¶ *When* I would comfort my ſelf againſt ſorrow, my heart *is* faint in me. 19. Behold, the voice of the cry of the daughter of my people, becauſe of them that dwell in a far country: *Is* not the LORD in Zion? *is* not her king in her? why have they provoked me to anger with their graven images, *and* with ſtrange vanities? 20. The harveſt is paſt, the ſummer is ended, and we are not ſaved. 21. For the hurt of the daughter of my people, am I hurt, I am black: aſtoniſhment hath taken hold on me. 22. *Is there* no balm in Gilead? *is there* no phyſician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?

In theſe verſes we have,

1. God *threatning* the deſtruction of a ſinful people. He hath born long with them, but they are ſtill more and more provoking, and therefore now their ruin is reſolved on, *I will ſurely conſume them*, ver. 13. *conſuming I will conſume them*, not only ſurely but utterly conſume them; will follow them with one judgment after another, till they are quite conſumed; it is a *conſumption determined*, Iſa. x. 23.

(1.) They ſhall be quite ſtripped of all their comforts, *ver.* 13. *There ſhall be no grapes on the vine.* Some underſtand it as ſpeaking their ſin; God came looking for grapes from this vineyard, ſeeking fruit upon this fig-tree, but he *found none*, as *Iſa.* v. 2. *Luke* xiii. 6. nay, they had not ſo much as *leaves*, Mat. xxi. 19. But it is rather to be underſtood of God's judgments upon them; and may be meant *literally*, the enemy ſhall ſeize the fruits of the earth, ſhall pluck the grapes and figs for themſelves, and beat down the very leaves with them: Or rather *figuratively*; they ſhall be deprived of all their comforts, and

ſhall have nothing left them wherewith to *make glad their hearts*. It is expounded in the laſt clauſe, *The things that I have given them ſhall paſs away from them.* Note, God's gifts are *upon condition*, and revocable upon non-performance of the condition. Mercies abuſed are forfeited, and it is juſt with God to take the forfeiture.

(2.) They ſhall be ſet upon by all manner of grievances, and ſurrounded with calamities, ver. 17 *I will ſend ſerpents among you*, the Chaldean army, fiery ſerpents, flying ſerpents, *cockatrices*, theſe ſhall *bite them* with their venomous teeth, give them wounds that ſhall be mortal; and they ſhall not be *charmed*, as ſome ſerpents uſed to be, with muſick. Theſe are ſerpents of another nature, that are not ſo wrought upon; or they are as *the deaf adder*, that *ſtops her ear, and will not hear the voice of the charmer.* The enemies are ſo intent upon making ſlaughter, that it will be to no purpoſe to ſpeak them fair, or offer any thing to pacify them, or mollify them, or bring them to a better temper. No peace with God, therefore none with them.

2. The people *ſinking into deſpair* under the preſſure of thoſe calamities: They that were *void of fear* when, the trouble was at a diſtance, and ſet it at defiance, are *void of hope* now it breaks in upon them; and have no heart, either to make head againſt it, or to bear up under it, *ver.* 14. They cannot think themſelves ſafe in the open villages; *Why do we ſit ſtill here?* Let us *aſſemble*, and go in a body into *the defenced cities:* Though they could expect no other, but to be ſurely cut off there at laſt, yet not ſo ſoon as in the country, and therefore *let us go and be ſilent* there; let us attempt nothing, nor ſo much as make a complaint, for to what purpoſe? It is not a *ſubmiſſive*, but a *ſullen* ſilence that they here condemn themſelves to. Thoſe that are moſt jovial in their proſperity, commonly deſpond moſt, and are moſt melancholy in trouble.

Now obſerve what it is that ſinks them.

1. They are ſenſible that God is angry with them. *The Lord our God has put us to ſilence*, hath ſtruck us with aſtoniſhment, and *given us water of gall to drink*, which is both bitter and ſtupifying or intoxicating: *Pſal.* lx. 3. *Thou haſt made us to drink the wine of aſtoniſhment.* We had better *ſit ſtill*, than riſe up and fall; better ſay nothing, than ſay nothing to the purpoſe. To what purpoſe is it to contend with our fate, when God himſelf is become our enemy, and fights againſt us? *Becauſe we have ſinned againſt the Lord*, therefore we are brought to this plunge. This may be taken as the language, (1.) Of their *indignation:* They ſeem to quarrel with God, as if he had dealt hardly with them, in *putting them to ſilence*, not permitting them to ſpeak for themſelves, and then telling them, it was becauſe they had *ſinned againſt him.* Thus mens fooliſhneſs *perverts their way*, and then their *hearts fret againſt the Lord.* Or rather, (2.) Of their *convictions:* At length they begin to ſee the hand of God lifted up againſt them, and ſtretched out in the calamities, under which they are now groaning, and to own that they have provoked him to contend with them. Note, Sooner or later God will bring the moſt obſtinate to acknowledge both his providence and his juſtice, in all the troubles they are brought into; to ſee and ſay, both that it is *his hand*, and that *he is righteous.*

2. They are ſenſible that the enemy is likely to be too hard for them, *ver.* 16. They are ſoon apprehenſive, that it is to no purpoſe to make head againſt ſuch a mighty force; they and their people are quite *diſpirited*; and when the courage of a nation is gone, their numbers will ſtand them in little ſtead. *The ſnorting of the horſes was heard from Dan*, i. e. the report of the formidable ſtrength of their cavalry was ſoon carried all the nation over, and every body *trembled at the ſound of the neighing of his ſteeds*; for *they are come*, and there is no oppoſing them; they have *devoured the land*, and *all that is in the city*; both town and country is laid waſte before them, not only the wealth, but the inhabitants of both, *thoſe that dwell therein.* Note, When God appears againſt us, every thing elſe that is againſt us appears very *formidable*; whereas if he be for us, every thing appears very *deſpicable*, Rom. viii. 31.

3. They are diſappointed in their expectations of deliverance out of their troubles, as well as when their troubles came they were a ſurprize to them; and this double diſappointment very much aggravated their calamity. (1.) The trouble *came* when they *little expected* it; *ver.* 15. *We looked for peace*, the continuance of our peace, *but no good came*, no good news from abroad; we looked *for a time of health* and proſperity to our nation, but *behold trouble*, the alarms of war, for as it follows, *ver.* 16. *the noiſe* of the enemies horſes was *heard from Dan.* Their falſe prophets had cried *peace, peace*, to them, which made it the more terrible, when the ſcene of war opened on a ſudden. This complaint will occur again, *chap.* xiv. 19. (2.) The deliverance did *not come*, when they had *long expected* it, ver. 20. *The harveſt is paſt, the ſummer is ended*, i. e. there is a great deal of *time* gone. Harveſt and ſummer are parts of the year, and when they are gone, the year draws towards a concluſion; ſo the meaning is: One year paſſeth after another, one campaign after another, and yet our affairs are in as ill a poſture as ever they were; no relief comes, nor is any thing done towards it; *We are not ſaved.* Nay, there is a great deal of opportunity loſt, the ſeaſon of action is over and ſlipt, the *ſummer* and *harveſt* are gone, and a cold and melancholy winter ſucceeds. Note, The ſalvation of God's church and people oftentimes goes on very ſlowly, and God keeps his people long in the expectation of it, for wiſe and holy ends. Nay, they ſtand in their own light, and put a bar in their own door, and are not ſaved, becauſe they are not ready for ſalvation.

4. They are deceived in thoſe things that were their confidence, and which they thought would have ſecured their peace to them, *ver.* 19. *The daughter of my people* cries, cries aloud, *becauſe of them that dwell in a far country*, becauſe of the *foreign* enemy that invades them, that comes from a far country to take poſſeſſion of ours; this occaſions the cry: and what is the cry? it is this; *Is not the Lord in Zion? Is not her king in her?* Theſe were the two things that they had all along buoyed up themſelves with, and depended upon. (1.) That they had among them the temple of God, and the tokens of his ſpecial preſence with them: the common cant was, *Is not the Lord in Zion?* what danger then need we fear? And they held by this when the trouble was breaking in upon them, ſurely we ſhall do well enough, for have we not God among us? But when it grew to an extremity, it was an aggravation of their miſery that they had thus flattered themſelves. (2.) That they had the throne of the houſe of David: as they had a temple, ſo they had a monarchy *jure divino*; *Is not Zion's king in her?* And will not Zion's God protect Zion's king and his kingdom? Surely he will; but why does he not? What (ſay they) hath Zion neither a God nor a king to ſtand by her, and help her, that ſhe is thus run down, and likely to be ruined? This outcry of theirs reflects upon God, as if his power and promiſe were broken or weakened; and therefore he returns an anſwer to it immediately, *Why have they provoked me to anger with their graven images?* They quarrel with God, as if he had dealt unkindly by them in forſaking them, whereas they by their idolatry had driven him from them; they have withdrawn from their allegiance to him, and ſo have thrown themſelves out of his protection. They *fret themſelves, and curſe their king and their God*, Iſa. viii. 21. when it is their own *ſin* that *ſeparates between them and God*, Iſa. lix. 1. they *feared not the Lord*, and *then what can a king do for them?* Hoſ. x. 3.

3. We have here the prophet himſelf *bewailing* the calamity and ruin of his people; for there were more of the lamentations of Jeremiah, than thoſe we find in the book that bears that title. Obſerve here,

1. How *great his griefs* were. He was an eye-witneſs of the deſolations of his country, and *ſaw* thoſe things which by the Spirit of prophecy he had *foreſeen.* In the foreſight, much more in the ſight of them, he cries out, *My heart is faint in me*, I ſink, I die away at the conſideration of it, *ver.* 18. *When I would comfort my ſelf againſt my ſorrow*, I do but labour in vain; nay, every attempt to alleviate the grief, doth but aggravate it. It is our wiſdom and duty, under mournful events, to do what we can to *comfort ourſelves againſt our ſorrow*, by ſuggeſting to our ſelves ſuch conſiderations, as are proper to allay the grief, and balance the grievance. But ſometimes the ſorrow is ſuch, that the more it is repreſſed, the more ſtrongly it recoils. It may ſometimes be the caſe of very good men, as of the prophet here, whoſe ſoul refuſed to be comforted, and *fainted* at the cordial, *Pſal.* lxxvii. 2, 3. He tells, *ver.* 21. what was the matter; it is *for the hurt of the daughter of my people*, that *I am* thus *hurt*; it is for their ſin, and the miſeries they have brought upon themſelves by it; it is for this that *I am black*, that I look black, that I go in black as mourners do, and that *aſtoniſhment hath taken hold on me*, ſo that I know not what to do, nor which way to turn. Note, The miſeries of our country ought to be very much the grief of our ſouls. A *gracious* ſpirit will be a *publick* ſpirit, a tender ſpirit, a mourning ſpirit. It becomes us to lament the miſeries of our fellow-creatures, much more to lay to heart the calamities of our country, and eſpecially of the church of God, to *grieve for the affliction of Joſeph.* Jeremiah had propheſied the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, and tho' the truth of his prophecy was queſtioned, yet he did not rejoice in the proof of the truth of it, by the accompliſhment of it, preferring the welfare of his country before his own reputation: if Jeruſalem had repented and been ſpared, he would have been far from fretting as Jonah did. Jeremiah had many enemies in Judah and Jeruſalem, that hated, and reproached, and perſecuted him; and in the judgments brought upon them, God reckoned with them for it, and pleaded his prophet's cauſe; yet he was far from rejoicing in it, ſo truly did he forgive his enemies, and deſire that God would forgive them.

2. How *ſmall his hopes* were, *ver.* 22. *Is there no balm in Gilead?* No medicine proper for a ſick and dying kingdom? Is there no *phyſician* there? No skilful, faithful hand to apply the medicine? He looks upon the caſe to be *deplorable*, and paſt relief. There is *no balm in Gilead*, that can cure the diſeaſe of ſin; *no phyſician* there, that can reſtore the health of a nation quite

quite over-run by such a foreign army as that of the Chaldeans. The desolations made are irreparable, and the disease is presently come to such a height, that there is no checking it. Or, this verse may be understood, as laying all the blame of the incurableness of their disease upon themselves; and so the question must be answered affirmatively; *Is there no balm in Gilead? No physician there?* Yes, certainly there is, God is able to help and heal them, there is a sufficiency in him to redress all their grievances. Gilead was a place in their own land, not far off; they had among themselves God's law and his prophets, with the help of which they might have been brought to repentance, and their ruin might have been prevented; they had princes and priests, whose business it was to reform the nation, and redress their grievances. What could have been done more than has been done for their recovery? *Why then is not* their health restored? Certainly it was not long of God, but of themselves; it was not for want of *balm* and a *physician*, but because they would not admit the application, nor submit to the methods of cure. The physician and physick were both ready, but the patient was wilful and irregular, would not be tied to rules, but must be humoured. Note, If sinners die of their wounds, their blood is upon their own heads. The blood of Christ is *balm in Gilead*, his Spirit is the *physician there*, both sufficient, all-sufficient, so that they might have been healed, but would not.

CHAP. IX.

In this chapter the prophet goes on faithfully to reprove sin, and to threaten God's judgments for it, and yet bitterly to lament both, as one that neither rejoiced at iniquity, *nor was* glad at calamities. (1.) *He here expresseth his great grief for the miseries of Judah and Jerusalem, and his detestation of their sins, which brought those miseries upon them,* ver. 1—11. (2.) *He justifies God in the greatness of the destruction brought upon them,* ver. 9, 12—16. (3.) *He calls upon others to bewail the woful case of Judah and Jerusalem,* ver. 17—22. (4.) *He shews them the folly and vanity of trusting in their own strength or wisdom, or the privileges of their circumcision, or any thing but God only,* ver. 23—26.

1. OH that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people. 2. Oh, that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place of wayfaring men, that I might leave my people, and go from them: for they *be* all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men. 3. And they bend their tongues *like* their bow *for* lies: but they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth; for they proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, saith the LORD. 4. Take ye heed every one of his neighbour, and trust ye not in any brother: for every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbour will walk with slanders. 5. And they will deceive every one his neighbour, and will not speak the truth: they have taught their tongue to speak lies, *and* weary themselves to commit iniquity. 6. Thine habitation *is* in the midst of deceit, through deceit they refuse to know me, saith the LORD. 7. Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, Behold, I will melt them, and try them; for how shall I do for the daughter of my people? 8. Their tongue *is as* an arrow shot out, it speaketh deceit: *one* speaketh peaceably to his neighbour with his mouth, but in heart he layeth his wait. 9. ¶ Shall I not visit them for these *things?* saith the LORD: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this? 10. For the mountains will I take up a weeping and wailing, and for the habitations of the wilderness a lamentation, because they are burnt up, so that none can pass through *them*, neither can *men* hear the voice of the cattle, both the fowl of the heavens and the beast are fled, they are gone. 11. And I will make Jerusalem heaps, *and* a den of dragons, and I will make the cities of Judah desolate, without an inhabitant.

The prophet being commissioned both to foretel the destruction coming upon Judah and Jerusalem, and to point out the sin for which that destruction was brought upon them, here, as elsewhere, speaks of both very feelingly: what he said of both came *from the heart*, and therefore one would have thought it should have reached *to the heart*.

1. He abandons himself to sorrow, in consideration of the *calamitous condition* of his people, which he sadly laments, as one that preferred Jerusalem before his *chief joy*, and her grievances before his chief sorrows.

(1.) He laments the slaughter of the persons; the blood-shed, and the lives lost, *ver.* 1. *O that my head were waters*, quite melted and dissolved with grief, that so mine eyes might be *fountains of tears*, weeping abundance, continually, and without intermission, still sending forth fresh floods of tears, as there still occur fresh occasions for them! The same word in Hebrew signifies both *the eye*, and a *fountain*, as if in this land of sorrows our eyes were designed rather for *weeping* than *seeing*. Jeremiah wept much, and yet wished he could weep more, that he might affect a stupid people, and rouse them to a due sense of the hand of God gone out against them. Note, It becomes us while we are here in this vale of tears, to conform to the temper of the climate, and to sow in tears, *Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted* hereafter, but let them expect that while they are here, the *clouds will still return after the rain*. While we find our hearts such fountains of sin, it is fit our eyes should be *fountains of tears*. But Jeremiah's grief here is upon the publick account: he would *weep day and night*, not so much for the death of his own near relations, but for the *slain of the daughter of his people*, the multitudes of his countrymen that fell by the sword of war. Note, When we hear of the numbers of *the slain* in great battles and sieges, we ought to be much affected with it, and not to make a light matter of it; yea, tho' they be not of the *daughter of our people*, for whatever people they are of, they are of the same human nature with us; and there is so many precious lives lost, as dear to them as ours to us, and so many precious souls gone into eternity.

2. He laments the desolations of the country. This he brings in, *ver.* 10. (for passionate mourners do not use to be very methodical in their discourses) not only for the towns and cities, but *for the mountains will I take up a weeping and wailing*, not barren mountains, but the fruitful hills with which Judea abounded: and for *the habitations of the wilderness*, or rather the *pastures of the plain*, that used to be *clothed with flocks*, or *covered over with corn*, and a goodly sight it was: but now *they are burnt up* by the Chaldean army, which, according to the custom of war, destroyed the forage, and carried off all the cattle; so that *none dares* to *pass through them*, for fear of meeting with some parties of the enemy; none *cares* to *pass through them*, every thing looks so melancholy and frightful: none have any business to pass through them, for they hear not the voice of the cattle there as usual, the bleating of the sheep, and the lowing of the oxen, that grateful musick to the owners: nay, both *the fowl of the heavens*, and the *beasts are fled*, either frightned away by the rude noises and terrible fires which the enemies make, or forced away because there is no subsistence for them. Note, God has many ways of turning *a fruitful land into barrenness for the wickedness of them that dwell therein*. And the havock war makes in a country, cannot but be for a lamentation to all tender spirits, for it is a tragedy which destroys the stage it is acted on.

2. He abandons himself *to solitude* in consideration of the *scandalous character and carriage* of his people. Tho' he dwells in Judah where God is known, in Salem where his tabernacle is, yet he is ready to cry out, *Wo is me that I sojourn in Mesech*, Psal. cxx. 5. while all his neighbours are fleeing to the defenced cities, and Jerusalem especially, in dread of the enemies rage, *chap.* iv. 5, 6. he is contriving to retire into some desert, in detestation of his peoples sin, *ver.* 2. *O that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place of way-faring men*, such a lonely cottage to dwell in as they have in the deserts of Arabia, which are uninhabited, for travellers to repose themselves in, *that I may leave my people and go from them!* Not only because of the ill usage they gave him, he would rather venture himself among the wild beasts of the desert, than among such treacherous barbarous people; but rather because his *righteous soul was vexed from day to day*, as Lot's was in Sodom, with the *wickedness of their conversation*, 2 Pet. ii. 7, 8. This doth not speak any intention or resolution he had thus to retire; God had cut him out work among them, which he must not quit for his own ease; we must not *go out of the world*, as bad as it is, before our time: if he could not reform them, he could bear a testimony against them; if he could not do good to many, yet he might to some: but it speaks a temptation he was in to leave them, and a threatning that they should be deprived of his ministry, and especially the holy indignation he had against their abominable wickedness, notwithstanding all the pains he had taken with them to reclaim them. It made him even weary of his life to see them dishonouring God as they did, and destroying themselves. Time was, when the place which God had chosen to put his name there, was the desire and delight of good men; David in a wilderness longed to be again in the courts of God's house; but now Jeremiah, in the courts of God's house (for there he was when he said this) wisheth himself in

in *a wilderneſs*. Thoſe have made themſelves very miſerable that have made God's people and miniſters weary of them, and willing to get from them.

Now to juſtify his willingneſs to leave them, he ſhews,

1. What he himſelf had obſerved among them. He would not think of leaving them becauſe they were *poor*, and in diſtreſs, but becauſe they were *wicked*.

(1.) They were *filthy*; they *be all adulterers*, i. e. the generality of them, *chap.* v. 8. They all either practiſed this ſin, or connived at thoſe that did. Lewdneſs and uncleanneſs was that crying ſin of Sodom, at which righteous Lot was *vexed in ſoul*, and it is a ſin that renders men loathſome in the eyes of God and all good men; it makes men an abomination.

(2.) They were *falſe*. This is the ſin that is moſt inlarged upon here; they that had been unfaithful to their God, were ſo to one another, and it was a part of their puniſhment, as well as their ſin, for even thoſe that love to *cheat*, yet hate to be *cheated*. (1.) Go into their *ſolemn meetings*, either for the exerciſes of religion, or the adminiſtration of juſtice, or for commerce, either to church, court, or exchange, and they are an *aſſembly of treacherous men*, they are ſo by conſent, they ſtrengthen one another's hands in doing any thing that is *perfidious*. There they will cheat *deliberately* and *induſtriouſly*, with deſign, with a malicious deſign, for *they bend their tongues like their bow for lies*, with a great deal of craft: their tongues are *fitted* for lying, as a bow that is bent is for ſhooting; and are as conſtantly uſed for that purpoſe. Their tongue turns as naturally to a lie, as the bow to the ſtring. But *they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth*. Their tongues are like a bow ſtrung, with which they might do good ſervice, if they would uſe that art and reſolution which they are ſo much maſters of in the cauſe of truth; but they will not do ſo. They appear not in defence of the *truths of God*, which were delivered to them by the prophets; but even thoſe that could not deny them to be truths, yet were content to ſee them *run down*. In the adminiſtration of juſtice they have not courage to ſtand by an honeſt cauſe, that has truth on its ſide, if greatneſs and power be on the other ſide. Thoſe that will be faithful to the truth, muſt be *valiant* for it, and not be *daunted* by the oppoſition given to it, nor *fear the face of man*. *They are not valiant for the truth in the land*, the land which has truth for the glory of it. Truth *is fallen* in the land, and they dare not lend a hand to help it up, *Iſa.* lix. 14, 15. We muſt anſwer another day not only for our enmity in *oppoſing* truth, but our cowardiſe in *defending* it. (2.) Go into their *families*, and you will find they will cheat their own brethren, *every brother will utterly ſupplant*, they will trip up one another's heels if they can, for they lye at catch to ſeek all advantages againſt thoſe they hope to make a hand of. Jacob had his name from *ſupplanting*, it is the word here uſed, they followed him in his name, but not in his true character, *without guile*. So very falſe are they, that you cannot *truſt in a brother*, but muſt ſtand as much upon your guard as if you were dealing with a ſtranger, with a Canaanite that has *balances of deceit in his hand*. Things are come to an ill paſs indeed, when a man cannot put confidence in his own brother. (3.) Go into *company*, and obſerve both their commerce and their converſation, and you will find there is nothing of ſincerity, or common honeſty among them, *non hoſpes ab hoſpite tutus*. The beſt advice a wiſe man can give you is, *to take heeed every one of his neighbour*, nay, of his *friend*, ſo ſome read it, of him whom he has *befriended*, and who pretends friendſhip to him. No man thinks himſelf bound either to be *grateful*, or to be *ſincere*. Take them in their converſe, and *every neighbour will walk with ſlander*, they care not what ill they ſay one of another, tho' never ſo falſe; that way that the ſlander goes they will go; they will *walk with* it. They will *walk about* from houſe to houſe to, carrying *ſlanders* along with them, all the ill-natured ſtories they can pick up or invent to make miſchief. Take them in their trading and bargaining, and *they will deceive every one his neighbour*, will ſay any thing, tho' they know it to be falſe, for their own advantage. Nay, they will lie for lying ſake, to keep their tongues in uſe to it, for *they will not ſpeak the truth*, but will tell a deliberate lie, and laugh at it when they have done.

And that which aggravates the ſin of this falſe and lying generation is, (1.) That they are *ingenious* to ſin. They have *taught their tongue to ſpeak lies*; implying, that through the reluctancies of natural conſcience, they found it difficult to bring themſelves to it. Their tongue would have ſpoken truth, but they *taught it to ſpeak lies*, and by degrees have made themſelves maſters of the art of lying, and have got ſuch a habit of it, that uſe has made it a ſecond nature to them. They learned it when they were young, for *the wicked are eſtranged from the womb, ſpeaking lies*, Pſal. lviii. 3. and now they are grown dextrous at it. (2.) That they are *induſtrious* to ſin. *They weary themſelves to commit iniquity*: they *put a force* upon their conſciences to bring themſelves to it, and *tire out* their convictions by offering them a continual violence; and they take a great deal of pains till they have even *ſpent themſelves* in bringing about their malicious deſigns. They are *wearied with* their ſinful purſuits, and yet not *weary* of them. The ſervice of ſin is a perfect drudgery, men run themſelves out of breath in it, and put themſelves to a great deal of toil to damn their own ſouls. (3.) That they grow worſe and worſe; *ver.* 3. *They proceed from evil to evil*, from one ſin to another, from one degree of ſin to another,. They began with leſſer ſins, *nemo repente fit turpiſſimus*, they began with equivocating and bantering, but at laſt came to downright lying. And they are now proceeding to greater ſins yet, for *they know not me, ſaith the Lord*. And where men have *no knowledge* of God, or no *conſideration* of what they have known of him, what good can be expected from them? Mens ignorance of God is the cauſe of all their ill carriage one towards another.

2. The prophet ſhews what God had informed him of their wickedneſs, and what he had determined againſt them.

1. God had *marked their ſin*. He could tell the prophet, (and he ſpeaks of it with compaſſion) what ſort of people they were that he had to deal with. *I know thy works and where thou dwelleſt*, Rev. ii. 13. So here, *ver.* 6. *Thine habitation is in the midſt of deceit*, i. e. all about thee are addicted to it, therefore ſtand upon thy guard; if *all men are liers*, it concerns us to *beware of men*, and be *wiſe as ſerpents*. They are deceitful men, therefore there is little hopes of thy doing any good among them; for make things never ſo plain, they have ſome trick or other wherewith to ſham off their convictions. This charge is enlarged upon, *ver.* 8. Their tongue was a *bow bent*, *ver.* 3. plotting and preparing miſchief; here it is *an arrow ſhot out*, putting in execution what they had projected. It is as a *ſlaying arrow*, ſo ſome readings of the original have it: their tongue has been to many an inſtrument of death. They *ſpeak peaceably to their neighbours*, againſt whom they are at the ſame time *lying in wait*. As Joab kiſſed Abner when he was about to kill him; and Cain, that he might not be ſuſpected of any ill deſign, *talked with his boother* freely and familiarly. Note, Fair words, when they are not attended with good intentions, are *deſpicable*, but when they are intended as a cloke and cover for wicked intentions, they are *abominable*. And while they did all this injury to one another, they put a great contempt upon God, not only they *know not me*, but, *ver.* 6. *through deceit*, through the deluſions of the falſe prophets, *they refuſe to know me*; they are ſo cheated into a good opinion of their own ways, the ways of their own heart, that they *deſire not the knowledge of God's ways*. Or, they are ſo wedded to this ſinful courſe they are in, and ſo bewitched with that, and the gains of that, that they will by no means admit the *knowledge of God*, becauſe that would be a check upon them in their ſins. This is the ruin of ſinners, they might be taught the good knowledge of the Lord, and they will not learn it. And where no knowledge of God is, what good can be expected? *Hoſ.* iv. 1.

2. He had *marked them for ruin*, ver. 7, 9, 11. Thoſe that will not *know God* as their law-giver, ſhall be made to know him as their judge. God determines here to bring his judgments upon them, for the refining of ſome, and the ruining of the reſt.

1. Some ſhall be *refined*, ver. 7. becauſe they are thus corrupt, *Behold, I will melt them, and try them*, will bring them into trouble, and ſee what that will do to bring them to repentance. Whether the furnace of affliction will purify them from their droſs? and whether when they are melted they will be new caſt in a better mould? He will make trial of leſſer afflictions, before he brings upon them utter deſtruction, for he *deſires not the death of ſinners*. They ſhall not be *rejected as reprobate ſilver*, till the founder has *melted in vain*, chap. vi. 29, 30. *For how ſhall I do for the daughter of my people?* He ſpeaks as one conſulting with himſelf what to do with them that might be for the beſt; and as one that could not find in his heart to caſt them off, and give them up to ruin, till he had firſt tried all means likely to bring them to repentance. Or, *how elſe ſhall I do for them?* They are grown ſo very corrupt, that there is no other way with them but to put them into the furnace; what other courſe can I take with them? *Iſa.* v. 4, 5. It is *the daughter of my people*, and I muſt do ſomething to vindicate my own honour, which will be reflected upon if I connive at their wickedneſs; I muſt do ſomething to reduce and reform them. A parent corrects his own children becauſe they are *his own*. Note, When God afflicts his people, it is with a gracious deſign to mollify and reduce them; it is but when need is, and when he knows it the beſt method he can uſe.

2. The reſt ſhall be ruined; *ver.* 9. *Shall I not viſit for theſe things?* Fraud and falſhood are ſins which God hates, and which he will reckon for; *ſhall not my ſoul be avenged on ſuch a nation as this*, that is ſo univerſally corrupt, and by their impudence in ſin, even dares and defies divine vengeance? The ſentence is paſſed, the decree is gone forth, *ver.* 11. *I will make Jeruſalem heaps* of rubbiſh, and lay it in ſuch ruins that it ſhall be fit for nothing but to be *a den of dragons*. And the *cities of Judah* ſhall be *a deſolation*. God makes them ſo, for he gives the enemy warrant and power

power to do it: but why is the *holy city* made a heap? The anſwer is ready, becauſe it was become an *unholy one.*

12. ¶ Who *is* the wiſe man that may underſtand this, and *who is he* to whom the mouth of the LORD hath ſpoken, that he may declare it, for what the land periſheth, *and* is burnt up like a wilderneſs that none paſſeth through? 13. And the LORD ſaith, Becauſe they have forſaken my law which I ſet before them, and have not obeyed my voice, neither walked therein; 14. But have walked after the imagination of their own heart, and after Baalim, which their fathers taught them: 15. Therefore thus ſaith the LORD of hoſts, the God of Iſrael, Behold, I will feed them, *even* this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink. 16. I will ſcatter them alſo among the heathen, whom neither they nor their fathers have known: and I will ſend a ſword after them, till I have conſumed them. 17. ¶ Thus ſaith the LORD of hoſts, Conſider ye, and call for the mourning-women, that they may come, and ſend for cunning *women*, that they may come. 18. And let them make haſte, and take up a wailing for us, that our eyes may run down with tears, and our eye-lids guſh out with waters. 19. For a voice of wailing is heard out of Zion, How are we ſpoiled! we are greatly confounded, becauſe we have forſaken the land, becauſe our dwellings have caſt *us* out. 20. Yet hear the word of the LORD, O ye women, and let your ear receive the word of his mouth, and teach your daughters wailing, and every one her neighbour lamentation. 21. For death is come up into our windows, *and* is entred into our palaces, to cut off the children from without, *and* the young men from the ſtreets. 22. Speak, Thus ſaith the LORD, Even the carcaſes of men ſhall fall as dung upon the open field, and as the handful after the harveſt-man, and none ſhall gather *them.*

Two things the prophet deſigns in theſe verſes with reference to the approaching deſtruction of Judah and Jeruſalem. (1.) To *convince* people of *the juſtice of God in it*, that they had by ſin brought it upon themſelves, and that therefore they had no reaſon to quarrel with God, who *did them no wrong at all*, but a great deal of reaſon to fall out with their ſins, which *did them all this miſchief.* (2.) To *affect* people with the *greatneſs of the deſolation* that was coming, and the miſerable effects of it, that by a terrible proſpect of it they might be awakened to repentance and reformation, which was the only way to prevent it, or at leaſt mitigate their own ſhare in it. This being deſigned,

1. He calls for the *thinking men*, by them to ſhew people the equity of God's proceedings, though they ſeemed harſh and ſevere, *ver.* 12. *Who*, where *is the wiſe man*, or the prophet *to whom the mouth of the Lord hath ſpoken?* You boaſt of your wiſdom, and of the prophets you have among you, produce me any one that has but the free uſe of human reaſon, or any acquaintance with divine revelation, and he will ſoon *underſtand this* himſelf, and it will be ſo clear to him that he will be ready to *declare it* to others, that there is a juſt ground of God's controverſy with this people. Do theſe *wiſe men* enquire *for what the land periſheth?* What is the matter that ſuch a change is made with this land? It uſed to be a land that God *cared* for, and he had *his eyes upon it* for good, *Deut.* xi. 12. But it is now a land that he has forſaken, and that his face is againſt: it uſed to *flouriſh* as the garden of the Lord, and to be *repleniſhed* with inhabitants, but now it is burnt up like a wilderneſs, that *none paſſeth through* it, much leſs cares to ſettle in it. It was ſuppoſed long ago that it would be asked when it came to this, *Wherefore has the Lord done thus unto this land? What means the heat of this great anger?* Deut. xxix. 24. To which queſtion God here gives a full anſwer, before which all fleſh muſt be ſilent. He produceth out of the record,

(1.) The *indictment preferred* and *proved* againſt them, upon which they had been *found guilty*, ver. 13, 14. It is charged upon them, and it cannot be denied, (1.) That they have *revolted* from their allegiance to their *rightful ſovereign:* therefore God has *forſaken their land*, and juſtly, becauſe they have *forſaken his law*, which he had ſo plainly, ſo fully, ſo frequently, *ſet before them*, and had not obſerved his orders, not *obeyed his voice*, nor *walked in* the ways that he had appointed. Here their wickedneſs began, in the omiſſion of their duty to their God, and a contempt of his authority. But it did not end here. It is further charged upon them, (2.) That they have *entred themſelves* into the ſervice of pretenders and uſurpers, have not only withdrawn themſelves from their obedience to their prince, but have taken up arms againſt him. For, (1.) They have acted according to *the dictates of their own luſts*, have ſet up their own will, the wills of the fleſh, and the carnal mind in competition with, and contradiction to, the will of God; they *have walked after the imagination of their own heart:* they would do as they pleaſed, whatever God and conſcience ſaid to the contrary. (2.) They have worſhipped the *creatures of their own fancy*, the work of their own hands, according to the tradition received from their fathers. *They have walked after Baalim*, the word is plural, they had many Baals, Baal-peor, and Baal-berith, the Baal of this place, and the Baal of the other place; for they had *lords many*, which *their fathers taught them* to worſhip, but which the God of their fathers had again and again forbidden. This was it for which *the land periſhed.* The King of kings never makes war thus upon his own ſubjects, but when they treacherouſly depart from him, and rebel againſt him, and it is become neceſſary by this means to chaſtiſe their rebellion, and reduce them to their allegiance: and they themſelves ſhall at length acknowledge that he is juſt in all that is brought upon them.

2. The *judgment* given upon this *indictment*, the ſentence upon the convicted rebels, which muſt now be executed, for it was righteous, and nothing could be moved in arreſt of it: *The Lord of hoſts, the God of Iſrael hath ſaid it, ver.* 15, 16. and who can reverſe it? (1.) That all their comforts *at home* ſhall be *poiſoned and embittered* to them, *I will feed this people with wormwood*, or rather with *wolfs-bane*, for it ſignifies an herb that is not wholeſome as wormwood is, tho' it be bitter, but ſome herb that is both nauſeous and noxious; and I will give them *water of gall*, or *juice of hemlock*, or ſome other herb that is poiſonous, *to drink.* Every thing about them, till it comes to their very meat and drink, ſhall be a terror and torment to them; God will *curſe their bleſſings*, Mal. ii. 2. (2.) That their *diſperſion abroad* ſhall be their deſtruction, *ver.* 16. *I will ſcatter them among the heathen.* They are corrupted and debauched by their intimacy with the heathen, with whom they *mingled themſelves* and *learned their works*, and now they ſhall loſe themſelves there where they loſt their virtue, *among the heathen*, i. e. they had violated the laws of that *truth* which is the bond and cement of ſociety and commerce, and addicted themſelves to deceit and lying, and therefore are juſtly crumbled to duſt, and *ſcattered among the heathen.* They ſet up gods which neither *they nor their fathers had known*, ſtrange gods, new gods. *Deut.* xxxii. 17. and now God will put them among neighbours which *neither they nor their fathers have known*, that they can claim no acquaintance with, and therefore can expect no favour from. And yet tho' they are *ſcattered* ſo as that they will not know where to find one another, God will know where to find them all out, (*Pſal.* xxi. 8.) with that evil which ſtill purſues impenitent ſinners, *I will ſend a ſword after them*, ſome killing judgment or other, *till I have conſumed them*; for when God judgeth he will overcome, when he *purſues* he will *overtake.* And now we ſee *for what the land periſheth*, all this deſolation is the deſert of *their deeds*, and the performance of *God's words.*

2. He calls for the *mourning women*, and engageth them with the arts they have to affect people, and move their paſſion, to lament theſe ſad calamities that were come or coming upon them, that the nation might be alarmed to prepare for them. *The Lord of hoſts* himſelf ſaith, *Call for the mourning-women that they may come*, ver. 17. The ſcope of this is to ſhew how very woful and lamentable the condition of this people was likely to be.

1. Here is work for the *counterfeit mourners*; ſend for the *cunning women* that know how to compoſe mournful ditties, or at leaſt to ſing them in mournful tunes and accents, and therefore are made uſe of at funerals to ſupply the want of *true mourners.* Let theſe *take up a wailing* for us, *ver.* 18. The deaths and funerals were ſo many that people have wept for them till they *have no more power to weep*, as thoſe, 1 *Sam.* xxx. 4. Let them therefore do it now whoſe trade it is; or rather, it intimates the extreme ſottiſhneſs and ſtupidity of the people, that laid not to heart the judgments they were under, nor even when there was ſo much *blood ſhed*, could find in their hearts to *ſhed a tear. They cry not when God bindeth them*, Job. xxxvi. 13. God ſent his *mourning prophets* to them to call them to weeping and mourning, but his word in their mouths did not work upon their faith; rather therefore than they ſhall go laughing to their ruin, let the *mourning women* come, and by humouring the thing, try to work upon their fancy, *that their eyes* may at length *run down with tears*, and *their eye-lids guſh out with waters.* Firſt or laſt ſinners muſt be weepers.

2. Here is work for the *real mourners.*

1. There is that which *is a lamentation.* The preſent ſcene is very tragical, *ver.* 19. *A voice of wailing is heard out of Zion*, ſome

ſome make this to be the ſong of the mourning women; it is rather an echo to it, returned by thoſe whoſe affections were moved by their wailings. In Zion the voice of joy and praiſe uſed to be heard, while the people kept cloſe to God, but ſin has altered the note, it is now the *voice of lamentation*. It ſhould ſeem to be the voice of thoſe who fled from all parts of the country to the *caſtle of Zion* for protection. Inſtead of rejoicing that they were got ſafe thither, they lamented that they were forced to ſeek for ſhelter there: *How are we ſpoiled!* How are we ſtripped of all our poſſeſſions! *we are greatly confounded*, aſhamed of our ſelves and our poverty, for that is it they complain of, that is it they bluſh at the thoughts of, rather than of their ſin; *We are confounded* becauſe *we have forſaken the land*, forced ſo to do by the enemy, not becauſe we have *forſaken the Lord*, drawn aſide of *our own luſt and enticed:* becauſe *our dwellings have caſt us out*, not becauſe our God hath *caſt us off*. Thus unhumbled hearts lament their calamity, but not their iniquity, the procuring cauſe of it.

2. There is more ſtill to come that *ſhall be for a lamentation:* Things are *bad*, but they are likely to be *worſe*. They whoſe land hath *ſpewed them out*, (as it did their predeceſſors the Canaanites, and juſtly, becauſe they trod in their ſteps, *Lev.* xviii. 28.) complain that they are driven into the city, but after a while thoſe of the city, and they with them ſhall be forced *thence* too: *Yet hear the word of the Lord*, he hath ſomething more to ſay to you, *ver.* 20. let *the women* hear it, whoſe tender ſpirits are apt to receive the impreſſions of grief and fear, for the men will not heed it, will not give it a patient hearing. The prophets will be glad to preach to a congregation of women that *tremble at God's word*. Let your *ear receive the word of God's mouth*, and bid it welcome, tho' it be a word of terror. Let the women *teach their daughters wailing*, which intimates that the trouble ſhall *laſt long*; grief ſhall be entailed upon the generation to come: young people are apt to love mirth, and expect mirth, and are diſpoſed to be gay and airy, but let the *elder women teach the younger* to be *ſerious*; tell them what a vale of tears they muſt expect to find this world, and train them up among the mourners in Zion, *Tit.* ii. 4, 5. Let every one *teach her neighbour lamentation*, which intimates that the trouble ſhall *ſpread far*, ſhall go from houſe to houſe. people ſhall not need to ſympathize with their friends, they ſhall all have cauſe enough to mourn for themſelves. Note, Thoſe that are themſelves affected with the terrors of the Lord, ſhould endeavour to affect others with them.

The judgment here threatned is made to look terrible.

1. Multitudes ſhall be ſlain, *ver.* 21. Death ſhall ride in triumph, and there ſhall be no eſcaping his arreſts, when he comes with commiſſion, neither within doors, nor without: not *within* doors, for let the doors be ſhut never ſo faſt, let them be never ſo firmly locked and bolted, *Death comes up into our windows*, like a thief in the night, it ſteals upon us ere we are aware. Nor doth it thus boldly attack the cottages only, but it is entred *into our palaces*, the palaces of our princes and great men, tho' never ſo *ſtately*, never ſo *ſtrongly built* and guarded. Note, No palaces can keep out death. Nor are thoſe more ſafe that are abroad; death cuts off even *the children from without*, and *the young men from the ſtreets*. The children who might have been ſpared by the enemy *in pity*, becauſe they had never been *hurtful* to them; and the *young men* who might have been ſpared *in policy*, becauſe capable of being ſerviceable to them, yet ſhall fall together by the ſword. It is uſual now even in the ſevereſt military executions, to put none to the ſword but thoſe that are found in arms, but then even the boys and girls playing in the ſtreets were ſacrificed to the fury of the conqueror.

2. Thoſe that are ſlain ſhall be left *unburied*, ver. 22. *Speak, Thus ſaith the Lord*, for the confirmation and aggravation of what was before ſaid, *even the carcaſes of men ſhall fall as dung*, neglected, and left to be offenſive to the ſmell, as dung is. Common humanity obligeth the ſurvivors to bury the dead, even for their own ſake, but here ſuch numbers ſhall be ſlain, and thoſe ſo diſperſed all the country over, that it ſhall be an endleſs thing to bury them all, nor ſhall there be hands enough to do it, nor ſhall the conquerors permit it, and thoſe that ſhould do it ſhall be overwhelmed with grief, ſo that they ſhall have no heart to do it. The dead bodies even of the faireſt and ſtrongeſt, when they have lain a while, become *as dung*, ſuch *vile bodies* have we. And here ſuch multitudes ſhall fall, that their bodies ſhall lie as thick as *heaps* of dung *in the furrows of the field*, and no more notice taken of them, than of the *handfuls* which *the harveſt-man* drops for the gleaners, for *none ſhall gather them*, but they ſhall remain in ſight, monuments of divine vengeance, that the eye of the impenitent ſurvivors may affect their heart. *Slay them not*, bury them not, *leſt my people forget*, Pſal. lix. 11.

23. ¶ Thus ſaith the LORD, Let not the wiſe *man* glory in his wiſdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches. 24. But let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he underſtandeth and knoweth me, that I *am* the LORD which exerciſe loving kindneſs, judgment and righteouſneſs in the earth: for in theſe *things* I delight, ſaith the LORD. 25. ¶ Behold, the days come, ſaith the LORD, that I will puniſh all *them which are* circumciſed with the uncircumciſed; 26. Egypt, and Judah, and Edom, and the children of Ammon, and Moab, and all *that are* in the utmoſt corners, that dwell in the wilderneſs: for all *theſe* nations *are* uncircumciſed, and all the houſe of Iſrael *are* uncircumciſed in the heart.

The prophet had been endeavouring to poſſeſs this people with a holy fear of God and his judgments, to convince them both of ſin and wrath, but ſtill they had recourſe to ſome ſorry ſubterfuge or other, under which to ſhelter themſelves from the conviction, and with which to excuſe themſelves in their obſtinacy and careleſſneſs; he therefore ſets himſelf here to drive them from theſe refuges of lies, and to ſhew them the inſufficiency of them.

(1.) When they were told how inevitable the judgment would be, they pleaded the defence of their politicks, and powers, which, with the help of their wealth and treaſure, they thought made their city impregnable. In anſwer to this he ſhews them the folly of truſting to, and boaſting of all theſe ſtays, while they have not a God in covenant to ſtay themſelves upon, *ver.* 23, 24.

Here he ſhews, 1. What we may not depend upon in a day of diſtreſs: *Let not the wiſe man glory in his wiſdom*, as if with the help of that he could out-wit or countermine the enemy; or in the greateſt extremity find out ſome evaſion or other, for a man's wiſdom may fail him then when he needs it moſt, and he may be taken in his own craftineſs: Ahithophel was *befooled*, and *counſellors* are oft *led away ſpoiled*. But if a man's *policies* fail him, yet ſure he may gain his point by might and dint of courage; no, *let not the ſtrong man glory in his ſtrength*, for the battle is not always to the ſtrong; David the ſtripling proves too hard for Goliah the giant. All human force is nothing *without God*, worſe than nothing *againſt him*. But may not the *rich man's wealth* be *his ſtrong city*, money anſwers all things; no, *Let not the rich man glory in his riches*, for they may prove ſo far from ſheltering him, that they may expoſe him, and make him the fairer mark. Let not the people boaſt of the *wiſe men*, and *mighty men*, and *rich men* that they have among them, as if they could make their part good againſt the Chaldeans, becauſe they have *wiſe men* to adviſe concerning the war, *mighty men* to fight their battles, and *rich men* to bear the charges of the war: Let not particular perſons think to eſcape the common calamity by their wiſdom, might, or money, for all theſe will prove but *vain things for ſafety*.

2. He ſhews what we may depend upon in a day of diſtreſs. (1.) Our only comfort in trouble will be, that we have done our duty. They that *refuſed to know God*, ver. 6. will boaſt in vain of their wiſdom and wealth, but they that *know God* intelligently, that *underſtand* aright *that he is the Lord*, that have not only right apprehenſions concerning his nature, and attributes, and relations to man, but receive and retain the impreſſions of them, may *glory in this*, it will be their rejoicing in the day of evil. (2.) Our only confidence in trouble will be, that having through grace, in ſome meaſure, done our duty, we ſhall find God a God all-ſufficient to us. We may *glory in this*, that wherever we are, we have an acquaintance with, and an intereſt in a God that *exerciſeth loving kindneſs, and judgment, and righteouſneſs in the earth*; that is not only juſt to all his creatures, and will do no wrong to any of them, but kind to all his children, and will protect them and provide for them. For *in theſe things I delight*. God delights to ſhew kindneſs, and to execute judgment himſelf, and is pleaſed with thoſe who herein are *followers of him as dear children*. Thoſe that have ſuch knowledge of the glory of God, as to be changed into the ſame image, and to partake of his holineſs, it is their perfection and glory: and the God they thus faithfully *conform to*, they may chearfully *confide in* in their greateſt ſtraits. But the prophet intimates, that the generality of this people took no care about this. Their *wiſdom*, and *might*, and *riches*, were their joy and hope, which would end in grief and deſpair. But thoſe few among them that had the knowledge of God might pleaſe themſelves with it, and boaſt themſelves of it; it would ſtand them in better ſtead than *thouſands of gold and ſilver*.

(2.) When they were told how provoking their ſins were to God, they vainly pleaded the *covenant of their circumciſion*. No doubt but they were the people of God; as they had the temple of the Lord in their city, ſo they had the mark of his children in their fleſh. It is true the Chaldean army has laid ſuch and ſuch nations waſte, becauſe they were *uncircumciſed*, and therefore not under

under the protection of the divine providence, as we are. To this the prophet anſwers, That the days of viſitation were now at hand, in which God would puniſh all wicked people, without making any diſtinction between the *circumciſed and uncircumciſed*, ver. 25, 26. They had by ſin profaned the crown of their peculiarity, and lived in common with the uncircumciſed nations, and ſo had forfeited the benefit of it, and muſt expect to fare never the better for it. God will *puniſh the circumciſed with the uncircumciſed.* As the ignorance of the *uncircumciſed* ſhall not excuſe their wickedneſs, ſo neither ſhall the privileges of the *circumciſed* excuſe theirs, but they ſhall be *puniſhed* together. Note, The Judge of all the earth is impartial, and none ſhall fare the better at his bar for any external advantages, but he will render to every man, *circumciſed* or *uncircumciſed*, according to his works. The condemnation of impenitent ſinners, that are *baptized*, will be as ſure, nay, and more ſevere than that of impenitent ſinners that are *unbaptized*. It would affect one to find here Judah induſtriouſly put between Egypt and Edom, as ſtanding upon a level with them, and under the ſame doom, *ver.* 26. Theſe nations were forbidden a ſhare in the Jews privileges, *Deut.* xxiii. 3. But the Jews are here told that they ſhall ſhare in their puniſhments. Thoſe *in the utmoſt corners, that dwell in the wilderneſs*, are ſuppoſed to be the Kedarens, and thoſe of the kingdoms of Hazor, as appears by comparing *chap.* xliv. 28—32. Some think they are ſo called, becauſe they dwelt as it were in a *corner* of the world: Others, becauſe they had *the hair of their head polled into corners:* However that was, they were of thoſe nations that were uncircumciſed in fleſh, and the Jews are ranked with them, and are as near to ruin for their ſins as they; for *all the houſe of Iſrael are uncircumciſed in the heart:* They have the ſign, but not the thing ſignified, *chap.* iv. 4. They are heathens in their heart, ſtrangers to God, and enemies in their minds by wicked works. Their *hearts* are diſpoſed to idols, as the hearts of the *uncircumciſed* Gentiles are. Note, The ſeals of the covenant, tho' they dignify and oblige us, yet they will not ſave us, unleſs the temper of our minds, and the tenor of our lives agree with the covenant. That only is circumciſion, and that baptiſm which is *of the heart*, Rom. ii. 28, 29.

CHAP. X.

We may conjecture that the prophecy of this chapter was delivered after the firſt captivity, in the time of Jeconiah, or Jehoiachin, when many were carried away to Babylon, for it has a double reference. (1.) *To thoſe that were carried away into the land of the Chaldeans, a country notorious above any other for idolatry and ſuperſtition: And they are here cautioned againſt the infection of the place, not to learn the way of the heathen,* ver. 1, 2. *For their aſtrology and idolatry are both fooliſh things,* ver. 3—5. *The worſhippers of idols brutiſh,* ver. 8, 9. *And ſo it will appear in the day of their viſitation,* ver. 14, 15. *They are likewiſe exhorted to adhere firmly to the God of Iſrael, for there is none like him,* ver. 6, 7. *He is the true God, lives for ever, and has the government of the world,* ver. 10—13. *And his people are happy in him,* ver. 16. (2.) *To thoſe that yet remained in their own land. And they are cautioned againſt ſecurity, and bid to expect diſtreſs,* ver. 17. 18. *And that by a foreign enemy, which God would bring upon them for their ſin,* ver. 20—22. *This calamity the prophet laments,* ver. 19. *and prays for the mitigation of it,* ver. 23—25.

1. HEAR ye the word which the LORD ſpeaketh unto you, O houſe of Iſrael. 2. Thus ſaith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not diſmayed at the ſigns of heaven, for the heathen are diſmayed at them. 3. For the cuſtoms of the people are vain: for *one* cutteth a tree out of the foreſt (the work of the hands of the workman) with the ax. 4. They deck it with ſilver and with gold, they faſten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not. 5. They *are* upright as the palm-tree, but ſpeak not: they muſt needs be born, becauſe they cannot go: be not afraid of them, for they cannot do evil, neither alſo *is it* in them to do good. 6. Foraſmuch as *there is* none like unto thee, O LORD, thou *art* great, and thy name *is* great in might. 7. Who would not fear thee, O King of nations? for to thee doth it appertain: foraſmuch as among all the wiſe *men* of the nations, and in all their kingdoms *there is* none like unto thee. 8. But they are altogether brutiſh and fooliſh: the ſtock is a doctrine of vanities. 9. Silver ſpread into plates is brought from Tarſhiſh, and gold from Uphaz, the work of the workman, and of the hands of the founder: blue and purple *is* their clothing: they *are* all the work of cunning *men*. 10. But the LORD *is* the true God, he *is* the living God, and an everlaſting king: at his wrath the earth ſhall tremble, and the nations ſhall not be able to abide his indignation. 11. Thus ſhall ye ſay unto them, The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, *even* they ſhall periſh from the earth, and from under theſe heavens. 12. He hath made the earth by his power, he hath eſtabliſhed the world by his wiſdom, and hath ſtretched out the heavens by his diſcretion. 13. When he uttereth his voice *there is* a multitude of waters in the heavens, and he cauſeth the vapours to aſcend from the ends of the earth: he maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treaſures. 14. Every man is brutiſh in *his* knowledge: every founder is confounded by the graven image: for his molten image *is* falſhood, and *there is* no breath in them. 15. They *are* vanity, *and* the work of errors: in the time of their viſitation they ſhall periſh. 16. The portion of Jacob *is* not like them: for he *is* the former of all *things*, and Iſrael *is* the rod of his inheritance; the LORD of hoſts *is* his name.

The prophet Iſaiah when he propheſied of the captivity in Babylon, added warnings againſt idolatry, and largely expoſed the ſottiſhneſs of idolaters, not only becauſe the temptations in Babylon would be in danger of drawing the Jews there to idolatry, but becauſe the afflictions in Babylon were deſigned to cure them of their idolatry. Thus the prophet Jeremiah here arms people againſt the idolatrous uſages and cuſtoms of the heathen, not only for the uſe of thoſe that were gone to Babylon, but of thoſe alſo that ſtaid behind; that being convinced and reclaimed by the word of God, the rod might be prevented, and it is *written for our learning.* Obſerve here,

1. A ſolemn charge given to the people of God, not to conform themſelves to the ways and cuſtoms of the heathen. *Let the houſe of Iſrael* hear and receive this word from the God of Iſrael, *Learn not the way of the heathen*, do not approve of it, no, nor think indifferently concerning it, much leſs imitate it, or accuſtom yourſelves to it. Let not any of their cuſtoms ſteal in among you, as they are apt to do inſenſibly, nor mingle themſelves with your religion. Note, It ill becomes thoſe that are taught of God to *learn the way of the heathen*, and to think of worſhipping the true God with ſuch rites and ceremonies as they uſed in the worſhip of their falſe gods. See *Deut.* xii. 29, 30, 31. It was the *way of the heathen* to worſhip the hoſt of heaven, the ſun, moon, and ſtars, to them they gave divine honours, and from them they expected divine favours, and therefore according as the *ſigns of heaven* were, whether they were *auſpicious* or *ominous*, they thought themſelves *countenanced* or *diſcountenanced* by their deities; which made them obſerve thoſe ſigns, the eclipſes of the ſun and moon, the conjunctions and oppoſitions of the planets, and all the unuſual phænomena of the celeſtial globe, with a great deal of anxiety, and trembling: Buſineſs was ſtopped, if any thing occurred that was thought to bode ill; if it did but *thunder on their left hand*, they were almoſt as if they had been thunderſtruck. Now God would not have his people to be *diſmayed at the ſigns of heaven*; to reverence the ſtars as deities, or to frighten themſelves with any prognoſtications grounded upon them. Let them fear the God of heaven, and keep up a reverence of his providence, and then they need not be *diſmayed at the ſigns of heaven*, for the *ſtars in their courſes* fight not againſt any that are at peace with God. The *heathen* are *diſmayed* at theſe ſigns, for they know no better, but let not the *houſe of Iſrael* that are taught of God be ſo.

2. Divers good reaſons given to enforce this charge.

1. The way of the heathen is very *ridiculous*, and *abſurd*, and is condemned even by the dictates of right reaſon, *ver.* 3. The *ſtatutes* and *ordinances* of the heathen are *vanity* itſelf, they cannot ſtand the teſt of a rational diſquiſition. This is again and again inſiſted upon here, as it was by Iſaiah. The Chaldeans valued themſelves by their wiſdom, in which they thought they excelled all their neighbours; but the prophet here ſhews, that they and all others that worſhipped idols, and expected help and relief from them, were brutiſh and ſottiſh, and had not common ſenſe.

(1.) Conſider what the idol is that is worſhipped, it was a *tree cut out of the foreſt* originally, it was fitted up by the *hands*

hands of the workman, ſquared and ſawed, and worked into ſhape, ſee *Iſa.* xliv. 12, &c. But after all it was but the ſtock of a tree, fitter to make a gate-poſt of than any thing elſe. But to hide the wood, they *deck it with ſilver and gold*, they gild or lacker it, or they deck it with gold and ſilver lace, or cloth of tiſſue. They *faſten it* to its place, which they themſelves have aſſigned it, *with nails and hammers*, that it fall not, or be thrown down, or ſtolen away, *ver.* 4. The image is made ſtraight enough, and it cannot be denied but that the workman did his part, for it *is upright as the palm-tree*, ver. 5. it looks ſtately, and ſtands up as if it were going to ſpeak to you, but it *cannot ſpeak*, it is a poor dumb creature: Nor can it take one ſtep towards your relief: If there be any occaſion for it to ſhift its place, it muſt be carried in proceſſion, for it *cannot go*. Very fitly doth it come in here, *be not afraid of them*, no more than of the ſigns of heaven: Be *not afraid of* incurring their diſpleaſure, for *they can do no evil*; be not afraid of forfeiting their favour, for *neither is it in them to do good*. If you think to mend the matter by mending the materials of which the idol is made, you deceive your ſelves: Idols of *gold and ſilver* are as unworthy to be worſhipped as *wooden gods:* The *ſtock* is a *doctrine of vanities*, ver. 8. It teacheth lies, teacheth lies concerning God: It is *an inſtruction of vanities, wood it is.* It is likely the idols of *gold and ſilver* had wood underneath for the *ſubſtratum*, and then *ſilver ſpread into plates is brought from Tarſhiſh*, imported from beyond ſea, and *gold from Uphaz*, or Phaz, which is ſometimes rendered the *fine gold*, Pſal. xxi. 3. A great deal of art is uſed, and pains taken about it: They are not ſuch ordinary mechanicks that are employed about theſe, as about the *wooden gods*, ver. 3. Theſe are *cunning men*, it is the *work of the workman*, the graver muſt do his part, when it has paſſed through *the hands of the founder:* Thoſe were but decked here and there with ſilver and gold, theſe are ſilver and gold all over. And that theſe gods might be reverenced as kings, *blue and purple is their clothing*, the colour of royal robes, *ver.* 9. which amuſeth ignorant worſhippers, but makes the matter no better. For what is the idol when it is made, and when they have made the beſt they can of it? He tells us, *ver.* 14. *They are falſhood*, they are not what they pretend to be, but a great cheat put upon the world: They are worſhipped as the gods that give us breath, and life, and ſenſe, whereas they are lifeleſs, ſenſeleſs things themſelves, and *there is no breath in them. No ſpirit in them*, ſo the word is, they are not animated, or inhabited, as they are ſuppoſed to be, by any *divine ſpirit*, or *numen*; they are ſo far from being gods, that they have not ſo much as the *ſpirit of a beaſt that goes downward. They are vanity, and the work of errors*, ver. 15. Enquire into the *uſe* of them, and you will find *they are vanity*, they are good for nothing, no help is to be expected from them, nor any confidence put in them: They are a *deceitful work, works of illuſions, or meer mockeries*, ſo ſome read the following clauſe: They *delude* thoſe that put their truſt in them, make fools of them, or rather, they make fools of themſelves. Enquire into the riſe of them, and they are *the work of errors*, grounded upon the groſſeſt miſtakes that ever men, that pretended to reaſon, were guilty of: They are the creatures of a deluded fancy; and the errors by which they were produced, they propagate among their worſhippers.

(2.) Infer from hence what the idolaters are that worſhip theſe idols, *ver.* 8. *They are altogether brutiſh and fooliſh*; they that make them are like unto them, ſenſeleſs and ſtupid, and there is *no ſpirit* in them, no uſe of reaſon, elſe they would never believe in ſuch gods; no ſenſe of honour, elſe they would never ſtoop to them, *ver.* 14. *Every man* that makes or worſhips idols, is become *brutiſh in his knowledge*, i. e. brutiſh for want of knowledge; or brutiſh in that very thing which one would think they ſhould be fully acquainted with; compare *Jude* 10. *What they know naturally*, what they cannot but know by the light of nature, *in thoſe things, as brute beaſts they corrupt themſelves.* Tho' in the works of creation they cannot but ſee the eternal power and Godhead of the Creator, yet they are become *vain in their imaginations, not liking to retain God in their knowledge.* See *Rom.* i. 21, 28. Nay, whereas they thought it a piece of wiſdom thus to multiply gods, it really was the greateſt folly they could be guilty of: *The world by wiſdom knew not God*, 1 Cor. i. 21. Rom. i. 22. *Every founder* is himſelf *confounded by the graven image*; when he has made it by a miſtake, he is more and more confirmed in his miſtake by it; he is bewildered, bewitched, and cannot diſentangle himſelf from the ſnare. Or, it is what he will one time or other be aſhamed of.

2. The God of Iſrael is the one only living and true God, and thoſe that have him for their God, need not make their application to any other; nay, to ſet up any other in competition with him, is the greateſt affront and injury that can be done him.

Let the *houſe of Iſrael* cleave to the God of Iſrael, and ſerve and worſhip him only. For,

1. He is a *non-ſuch.* Whatever men may ſet *in competition* with him, there is none to be *compared* with him. The prophet turns from ſpeaking with the utmoſt diſdain of the idols of the heathen (as well he might) to ſpeak with the moſt profound and awful reverence of the God of Iſrael, *ver.* 6, 7. *Foraſmuch as there is none like unto thee, O Lord*, none of all the heroes which the heathen have deified, and make ſuch ado about; the dead men of whom they made dead images, and worſhipped them. Some were deified and adored for their *wiſdom*, but *among all the wiſe men of the* nations, the greateſt philoſophers, or ſtateſmen, as Apollo or Hermes, there is none like thee. Others were deified and adored for their dominion, but *in all their royalty*, ſo it may be read, among all their kings, as Saturn and Jupiter, *there is none like unto thee.* What is the glory of a man that invented an uſeful art, or founded a flouriſhing kingdom (and theſe were grounds ſufficient among the heathen to intitle men to an apotheoſis) compared with the glory of him that is the Creator of the world, and that *formeth the ſpirit of man within him?* What is the glory of the greateſt prince or potentate, compared with the glory of him whoſe *kingdom ruleth over all?* He acknowledgeth, *ver.* 6. *O Lord, thou art great*, infinite and immenſe, and *thy name is great in might*, thou haſt all power, and art known to have it; mens *name* is often beyond their *might*, they are thought to be greater than they are, but God's *name is great*, and no greater than he really is. And therefore *who would not fear thee, O king of nations?* Who would not chuſe to worſhip ſuch a God as this that can *do every* thing, rather than ſuch dead idols as the heathen worſhip that can *do nothing?* Who would not be afraid of offending or forſaking a God whoſe name is ſo *great in might?* Which of all the nations, if they underſtand themſelves aright, *would not fear him* who is the *King of nations?* Note, It is not only the houſe of Iſrael that is bound to worſhip the great Jehovah, as the *God of Iſrael*, the *King of ſaints*, Rev. xv. 4, 5. but all the families of the earth are bound to worſhip him as *King of nations*; for *to him it doth appertain*, to him it *ſuits* and *agrees.* Note, There is an admirable decency and congruity in the worſhipping of God only: It is fit that he that is *God alone*, ſhould *alone* be ſerved; that he that is Lord *of all* ſhould be ſerved *by all*; that he that is great ſhould be *greatly feared*, and *greatly praiſed.*

2. His *verity* is as evident as the idols *vanity*, ver. 10. They are the work of mens hands, and therefore nothing is more plain than that it is a jeſt to worſhip them, if that may be called *a jeſt*, which is ſo great an indignity to him that made us: *But the Lord is the true God*, the *God of truth*, he is *God in truth, God Jehovah is truth*, he is not a counterfeit, and pretender as they are, but is really what he has revealed himſelf to be; he is one we may depend upon, in whom and by whom we cannot be deceived. (1.) Look upon him as he is in himſelf, and he is *the living God*; he is life itſelf, has life in himſelf, and is the fountain of life to all the creatures. The gods of the heathen are *dead* things, worthleſs and uſeleſs, but ours is a *living God*, and hath immortality. (2.) Look upon him with relation to his creatures, and he is *a king*, and abſolute monarch over them all, is their owner and ruler, has an inconteſtable right both to command them and diſpoſe of them; as *a king* he protects the creatures, provides for their welfare, and preſerves peace among them. He is an *everlaſting* king: The *counſels* of his kingdom were from everlaſting, and the *continuance* of it will be to everlaſting. He is a *king of eternity.* The idols whom they call their *kings*, are but of yeſterday, and will ſoon be aboliſhed; and the kings of the earth that ſet them up to be worſhipped, will themſelves be in the duſt ſhortly, but *the Lord ſhall reign for ever, thy God, O Zion, unto all generations.*

3. None knows the power of his anger. Let us ſtand in awe, and not dare to provoke him by giving that glory to another, which is due to him alone, for *at his wrath the earth ſhall tremble*, even the ſtrongeſt and ſtouteſt of the kings of the earth; nay, the earth, as firmly as it is fixed, when he pleaſeth, is made to quake, and the rocks to *tremble*, Pſal. civ. 32. Hab. iii. 6, 10. Tho' the *nations* ſhould join together to contend with him, and unite their force, yet they would be found utterly unable not only to *reſiſt*, but even to *abide his indignation.* They cannot only not make head againſt it, for it would overcome them, but they cannot bear up under it, for it would overload them, *Pſal.* lxxvi. 7, 8. *Neh.* i. 6.

4. He is the God of nature, the fountain of all being; and all the powers of nature are at his command and diſpoſe, *ver.* 12, 13. The God we worſhip is he that made the heavens and the earth, and has a ſovereign dominion over both: So that his *inviſible things* are manifeſted, and proved in the *things that are ſeen.*

(1.) If we look back we find that the whole world owed its original to him, as its firſt cauſe. It was a common ſaying even among the *Greeks*, *He that ſets up to be another god, ought firſt to make another world.* While the heathen worſhip gods that are made, we worſhip the God that made us and all things. (1.) The earth is a body of vaſt bulk, has valuable treaſures in its bowels, and more valuable fruit on its ſurface. It and them he hath *made by his power*; and it is by no leſs than an infinite power that it *hangs upon nothing*, as it doth,

Job xxvi. 7. *Ponderibus librata suis.* (2.) The world, the habitable part of the earth, is admirably fitted for the use and service of man, and *he hath established* it so *by his wisdom*, so that it continues serviceable in constant changes, and yet a continual stability from one generation to another. Therefore both *the earth* and *the world* are his, *Psal.* xxiv. 1. (3.) The heavens are wonderfully *stretched out* to an incredible extent, and it is *by his discretion* that they are so, and that the motions of the heavenly bodies are directed for the benefit of this lower world. These *declare his glory*, Psal. xix. 1. and oblige us to declare it; and not give that glory to the heavens which is due to him that made them.

(2.) If we look up, we see his providence to be a continual creation, *ver.* 13. *When he uttereth his voice*, gives the word of command, *there is a multitude of waters in the heavens* which are poured out on the earth, whether for judgment or mercy, as he intends them. When *he uttereth his voice* in the thunder, presently there follow thunder-showers, in which there are a *multitude of waters*; and those come with *a noise*, as the margin reads it; and we read of the *noise of abundance of rain* 1 *Kings* xviii. 41. Nay, there are wonders done daily in the kingdom of nature without noise: *He causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth*, from all parts of the earth, even the most remote, and chiefly those that lie next the sea. All the earth pays the tribute of vapours, because all the earth receives the blessing of rain. And thus the moisture in the universe, like the money in a kingdom, and the blood in the body, is continually *circulating* for the good of the whole. Those vapours produce wonders, for of them are formed *lightnings for the rain* and *the winds* which God from time to time *brings forth out of his treasures*, as there is occasion for them, directing them all in such measure, and for such use, as he thinks fit, as payments are made out of the treasury. All the meteors are so ready to serve God's purposes, that he seems to have treasures of them that cannot be exhausted, and may at any time be drawn from, *Psal.* cxxxv. 7. God glories in the treasures he has of these, *Job* xxxviii. 22, 23. This God can do, but which of the idols of the heathen can do the like? Note, There is no sort of weather but furnisheth us with a proof and instance of the wisdom and power of the Great Creator.

5. This God is Israel's God in covenant, and the felicity of every Israelite indeed. Therefore let the house of Israel cleave to him, and not forsake him to embrace idols; for if they do, they certainly change for the worse, for, *ver.* 16. *the portion of Jacob is not like them:* Their rock is not as our rock, *Deut.* xxxii. 31. nor ours like their mole-hills. Note, 1. They that have the Lord for their God, have a full and compleat happiness in him. The *God of Jacob* is the *portion of Jacob*; he is *his all*, and in him he hath enough, and needs no more in this world or the other. In him we have a *worthy portion*, Psal. xvi. 5. 2. If we have an entire satisfaction and complacency in God as our portion, he will have a gracious delight in us as his people, whom he owns as *the rod of his inheritance*, his possession and treasure, with whom he dwells, and by whom he is served and honoured. 3. It is the unspeakable comfort of all the Lord's people, that he that is their God is *the former of all things*, and therefore is able to do all that for them, and give all that to them, which they stand in need of: Their *help stands in his name, who made heaven and earth.* And he is the *Lord of hosts*, of all the hosts in heaven and earth, hath them all at his command, and will command them into the service of his people, when there is occasion. This is *the name* by which they know him, which they first give him the glory of, and then take to themselves the comfort of. 4. Herein God's people are happy above all *other people*, happy indeed, *bona si sua norint.* The gods which the heathen pride, and please, and so portion themselves in, are vanity and a lie; but *the portion of Jacob is not like them.*

3. The prophet having thus compared the gods of the heathen with the God of Israel (between whom there is no comparison) reads the doom, the certain doom of all those pretenders, and directs the Jews in God's name to read it to the worshippers of idols, though they were their lords and masters, *ver.* 11. *Thus shall ye say unto them*, and the God ye serve will bear you out in saying it, *the gods which have not made the heavens and the earth*, and therefore are no gods, but usurpers of the honour due to him only, who did make heaven and earth, *those shall perish*; perish of course, because they are vanity; perish by his righteous sentence, because they are rivals with him, as gods they shall perish: *From off the earth*, even all those things *on earth beneath*, which they make gods of; and *from under these heavens*, even all those things in the firmament of heaven, *under* the highest heavens, which are deified, according to the distribution in the second commandment. These words in the original are not in the Hebrew, like all the rest, but in the Chaldee dialect, that the Jews in captivity might have this ready to say to the Chaldeans in their own language, when they tempted them to idolatry: Do you press us to worship your gods? We will never do that; for, (1.) They are *counterfeit deities*, they are *no gods*, for they *have not made the heavens and the earth*, and therefore are not entitled to our homage; nor are we indebted to them either for the products of the earth, or the influences of heaven, as we are to the God of Israel. The primitive Christians would say, when they were urged to worship such a god, *let him make me a world, and he shall be my god.* While we have him to worship, who made heaven and earth, it is very absurd to worship any other. (2.) They are *condemned* deities; they *shall perish*, the time shall come, when they shall be no more respected as they are now, but shall be buried in oblivion, and they and their worshippers shall sink together; the earth shall no longer *bear* them, the heavens shall no longer *cover* them, but both shall abandon them. It is repeated, *ver.* 15. *In the time of their visitation*; when God comes to reckon with idolaters, he shall make them sick of their idols, and glad to be rid of them; they shall *cast them to the moles and to the bats*, Isa. ii. 20. Whatever runs against God and religion, will be run down at last.

17. ¶ Gather up thy wares out of the land, O inhabitant of the fortress. 18. For thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will sling out the inhabitants of the land at this once, and will distress them, that they may find *it so.* 19. ¶ Wo is me for my hurt, my wound is grievous: but I said, Truly this *is* a grief, and I must bear it. 20. My tabernacle is spoiled, and all my cords are broken: my children are gone forth of me, and they *are* not: *there is* none to stretch forth my tent any more, and to set up my curtains. 21. For the pastors are become brutish, and have not sought the LORD: therefore they shall not prosper, and all their flocks shall be scattered. 22. Behold, the noise of the bruit is come, and a great commotion out of the north-country, to make the cities of Judah desolate, *and* a den of dragons. 23. ¶ O LORD, I know that the way of man *is* not in himself: *it is* not in man that walketh to direct his steps. 24. O LORD, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing. 25. Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on thy name: for they have eaten up Jacob, and devoured him, and consumed him, and have made his habitation desolate.

In these verses,

(1.) The prophet threatens in God's name the approaching ruin of Judah and Jerusalem, *ver.* 17, 18. The Jews that continued in their own land, after some were carried into captivity, were very secure; they thought themselves *inhabitants of a fortress*, their country was their *strong-hold*, and in their own conceit impregnable, but they are here bid to think of leaving it; they must prepare to go after their brethren, and pack up their effects in expectation of it: *Gather up thy wares out of the land*; contract your affairs, and bring them into as little a compass as you can. *Arise, depart, this is not your rest*, Mic. ii. 10. Let not what you have lie scattered, for the Chaldeans will be upon you again, to be the executioners of the sentence God has passed upon you, *ver.* 18. *Behold, I will sling out the inhabitants of the land at this once*; they have hitherto *dropped* out, by a few at a time, but one captivity more shall make a thorough riddance, and they shall be *slung* out as a stone out of a sling, so easily, so thoroughly shall they be cast out; nothing of them shall remain, they shall be thrown out with violence, and driven to a place at a great distance off in a little time. See this comparison used to signify an utter destruction, 1 *Sam.* xxv. 29. *Yet once more* God will shake their land, and *shake the wicked out of it*, Heb. xii. 26. He adds, *and I will distress them, that they may find it so.* He will not only throw them out hence (that he may do, and yet they may be easy elsewhere) but wherever they go, trouble shall follow them; they shall be continually perplexed and straitned, and at a loss within themselves; and who or what can make those easy whom God *will distress?* Whom he will distress, *that they may find it so*, i. e. that they may *feel* that which they would not *believe.* They were told many a time of the weight of God's wrath, and their utter inability to make head against it, or bear up under it; were told that their sin would be their ruin, and they would not regard or credit what was told them, but now *they shall find it so*; and therefore God will pursue them with his judgments, *that they may find it so*, and be forced to acknowledge it. Note, Sooner or later sinners will *find it* just *so* as the word

of God has repreſented things to them, and no better, and that the threatnings were not bugbears.

(2.) He brings in the people ſadly lamenting their calamities, *ver.* 19. *Wo is me for my hurt.* Some make this the prophet's own lamentation, not for himſelf, but for the calamities and deſolations of his country: He mourned for thoſe that would not be perſwaded to mourn for themſelves; and ſince there were none that had ſo much ſenſe as to join with him, he *weeps in ſecret*, and cries out, *Wo is me.* In mournful times, it becomes us to be of a mournful ſpirit. But it may be taken as the language of the people, conſidered as a body, and therefore ſpeaking as a ſingle perſon. It is what *they ſhould ſay*, the prophet puts theſe words into their mouths; whether they would ſay them or no, they ſhould have cauſe to ſay them: Some among them would thus bemoan themſelves, and all of them at laſt would be forced to do it.

1. They lament it, that the affliction is very great, and it is very hard to them to bear it; the more hard, becauſe they had not been uſed to trouble, and now did not expect it. *Wo is me for my hurt*, not for what I *fear*, but for what I *feel*; for they are not, as ſome are, *worſe frightned than hurt.* Nor is it a ſlight hurt, but *a wound*, a wound that is *grievous*, very painful, and very threatning.

2. That there is *no remedy but patience*; they cannot help themſelves, but muſt ſit ſtill, and abide it. *But I ſaid*, when I was about to complain of my wound, to what purpoſe is it to complain? *This is a grief and I muſt bear it* as well as I can. This is the language rather of a *ſullen* than of a *gracious* ſubmiſſion; of a patience *per force*, not a patience by principle. When I am in affliction, I ſhould ſay, this is an evil, and *I will bear it*, becauſe it is the will of God I ſhould, becauſe his wiſdom has appointed this for me, and his grace will make it work for good to me. This is *receiving evil* at the hand of God, *Job* ii. 10. But to ſay, this is an evil, *and I muſt bear it*, becauſe I cannot help it, is but a brutal patience, and argues a want of thoſe good thoughts of God, which we ſhould always have, even under our afflictions; ſaying, not only God can and will do what he pleaſeth, but *let him do what he pleaſeth.*

3. That the country was quite ruined and waſted, *ver.* 20. *My tabernacle is ſpoiled.* Jeruſalem, though a ſtrong city, now proves as weak and moveable as a tabernacle: Their government is diſſolved, and their ſtate fallen to pieces, like a tabernacle or tent, when it is taken down, and *all its cords*, that ſhould keep it together, are *broken.* Or, By the tabernacle here may be meant the temple, the ſanctuary, which at firſt was but a tabernacle, and is now called ſo, as then it was ſometimes called a temple. Their church is ruined, and all the ſupports of it fail. It was a general deſtruction of church and ſtate, city and country; and there were none to repair theſe deſolations, *my childeren are gone forth of me*, ſome are fled, others ſlain, others carried into captivity, ſo that as to me *they are not*, I am like to be an outcaſt, and to periſh for want of ſhelter; for *there is none to ſtretch forth my tent any more*, none of my children that uſed to do it for me, *none to ſet up my curtains*, none to do me any ſervice. *Jeruſalem has none to guide her of all her ſons*, Jer. li. 18.

4. That the rulers took no care, nor any proper meaſures for the redreſs of their grievances, and the re-eſtabliſhing of their ruined ſtate, *ver.* 21. *The paſtors are beeome brutiſh.* When the *tents*, the ſhepherds tents, were *ſpoiled*, ver. 20. it concerned the *ſhepherds* to look after them, but they were *fooliſh ſhepherds.* Their kings and princes had no regard at all to the publick welfare, ſeemed to have no ſenſe of the deſolations of the land, but were quite beſotted and infatuated. The prieſts, the paſtors of God's tabernacle, did a great deal towards the ruin of religion, but nothing towards the repair of it. They are *brutiſh* indeed, for *they have not ſought the Lord*, they have neither made their peace with him, nor their prayer to him; they had no eye to him and his providence, in their management of affairs; they neither acknowledged the judgment, nor expected the deliverance to come from his hand. Note, Thoſe are brutiſh people that do not ſeek the Lord, that live without prayer, and live without God in the world. Every man is either *a ſaint* or *a brute.* But it is ſad indeed with a people, when their paſtors, that ſhould feed them *with knowledge and underſtanding*, are themſelves thus brutiſh. And what comes of it? *Therefore they ſhall not proſper*; none of their attempts for the publick ſafety ſhall ſucceed. Note, Thoſe cannot expect to proſper, who do not by faith and prayer take God along with them in all their ways. And when the *paſtors* are *brutiſh*, what elſe can be expected but that *all their flocks* ſhould be *ſcattered*; for *if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into the ditch.* The ruin of a people is often owing to the *brutiſhneſs* of their *paſtors.*

5. That the report of the enemy's approach was very dreadful, *ver.* 22. *The noiſe of the bruit is come*, i. e. of the report which at firſt was but whiſpered and bruited abroad, as wanting confirmation: It now proves too true, there is a *great commotion* ariſeth *out of the north country*, which threatens to make all the cities of Judah *deſolate*, and *a den of dragons*; for they muſt all expect to be ſacrificed to the avarice and fury of the Chaldean army. And what elſe can that place expect, but to be made a *den of dragons*, which has by ſin made itſelf a *den of thieves?*

(3.) He turns to God, and addreſſeth himſelf to him, finding it to little purpoſe to ſpeak to the people. It is ſome comfort to poor miniſters, that if men will not hear them, God will; and to him they have liberty of acceſs at all times. Let them cloſe their preaching with prayer, as the prophet, and then they ſhall have no reaſon to ſay they have *laboured in vain.*

1. The prophet here acknowledgeth the ſovereignty and dominion of the divine providence, that by it, and not by their own will and wiſdom, the affairs both of nations and particular perſons are directed and determined, *ver.* 23. This is an article of our faith, which it is very proper for us to make confeſſion of at the throne of grace, when we are complaining of an affliction, or ſuing for a mercy. *O Lord, I know* and believe, *that the way of man is not in himſelf*; Nebuchadnezzar did not come of himſelf againſt our land, but by the direction of a divine providence. We cannot of *our ſelves* do any thing for our own relief, unleſs God work with us, and command deliverance for us, for *it is not in man that walketh to direct his ſteps*, though he ſeem in his walking to be perfectly at liberty, and to chuſe his own way. Thoſe that had promiſed themſelves a long enjoyment of their eſtates and poſſeſſions, when they were thrown out by the Chaldeans, were made to know by ſad experience, that *the way of man is not in himſelf*; the deſigns which men lay deep, and think well formed, are daſhed to pieces in a moment. We muſt all apply this to ourſelves, and mix faith with it; that we are not at our own diſpoſe, but under a divine direction; the event is often over-ruled quite contrary to our intention and expectation. We are not maſters of our own way, nor can we think that every thing ſhould be *according to our mind*; we muſt therefore refer ourſelves to God, and acquieſce in his will. Some think the prophet mentions this here with deſign to make this comfortable uſe of it, that the way of the Chaldean army being not in themſelves, they can do no more than God permits them; he can ſet bounds to theſe proud waves, and ſay, *hitherto they ſhall come, and no further.* And a quieting conſideration it is, that the moſt formidable enemies have *no power againſt* us, but *what is given them from above.*

2. He deprecates the divine wrath, that it might not fall upon God's Iſrael, *ver.* 24. He ſpeakes not for himſelf only, but on the behalf of his people, *O Lord, correct me, but with judgment*, i. e. in meaſure and with moderation, and in wiſdom no more than is neceſſary for the driving out of the fooliſhneſs that is bound up in our hearts: *Not in thine anger*; how ſevere ſoever the correction be, let it come from thy love, and be deſigned for our good, and made to work for good; not to *bring us to nothing*, but to bring us home to thy ſelf. Let it not be according to the deſert of our ſins, but according to the deſigns of thy grace. Note, 1. We cannot pray in faith that we may never be *corrected*, while we are conſcious to our ſelves that we need it and deſerve it, and know that as many as God loves he chaſtens. 2. The great thing we ſhould dread in affliction is the wrath of God. Say not, Lord, *do not correct* me, but, Lord, do not correct me *in anger*; for that will infuſe wormwood and gall into the affliction and miſery; that will *bring us to nothing*; we may bear the ſmart of his rod, but we cannot bear the weight of his wrath.

3. He imprecates the divine wrath againſt the oppreſſors and perſecutors of Iſrael, *ver.* 25. *Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not.* This prayer doth not come from a ſpirit of malice or revenge, nor is it intended to preſcribe to God whom he ſhould execute his judgments upon, or in what order: But, (1.) It is an appeal to his juſtice; *q. d.* Lord, we are a provoking people, but are there not other nations that are more ſo? And ſhall we only be puniſhed? We are thy children, and may expect a fatherly correction; but they are thine enemies, and againſt them we have reaſon to think thine *indignation* ſhould be, not againſt us. This is God's uſual method: The *cup put into the hands* of God's people is *full of mixtures*, mixtures of mercy; but the *dregs of the cup* are reſerved for *the wicked of the earth*, let them *wring them out*, Pſal. lxxv. 8. (2.) It is a prediction of God's judgments upon all the impenitent enemies of his church and kingdom. If *judgment begin* thus *at the houſe of God*, what ſhall be *the end* of thoſe that *obey not his goſpel?* 1 Pet. iv. 17. See how the *heathen* are deſcribed, on whom God's *fury* ſhall be *poured out.* (1.) They are *ſtrangers* to God, and are content to be ſo. They *know him not*, nor deſire to know him. They are *families* that live without prayer, that have nothing of religion among them; they *call not on God's name:* And thoſe that *reſtrain prayer*, it is an evidence they *know not God*; for they that know him, will ſeek to him, and intreat his favour. (2.) They are *perſecutors* of the people of God, and are reſolved to be ſo. They have *eaten up Jacob*, with as much greedineſs as thoſe that are hungry eat their neceſſary food; nay, with more

more, for they never know when they have enough; they have *devoured him*, and *conſumed him*, and *made his habitation deſolate*, i. e. the land in which he lives; or the temple of God, which is his habitation among them. Note, What the heathen, in their rage and malice, do againſt the people of God, though therein he makes uſe of them as the inſtruments of his correction, yet he will for that make them the objects of his indignation. This prayer is taken from *Pſal.* lxxix. 6, 7.

CHAP. XI.

In this chapter, (1.) *God by the prophet puts the people in mind of the covenant he had made with their fathers; and how much he had inſiſted upon it, as the condition of the covenant, that they ſhould be obedient to him,* ver. 1—7. (2.) *He chargeth it upon them, that they in ſucceſſion to their fathers, and in confederacy among themſelves, had obſtinately refuſed to obey him,* ver. 8—10. (3.) *He threatens to puniſh them with utter ruin for their diſobedience, eſpecially for their idolatry,* ver. 11, 13. *and tells them, that their idols ſhould not ſave them,* ver. 12. *that their prophets ſhould not pray for them.* ver. 14. *and juſtifies his proceedings herein, they having brought all this miſchief upon themſelves by their own folly and wilfulneſs,* ver. 15—17. (4.) *Here is an account of a conſpiracy formed againſt Jeremiah by his fellow-citizens, the men of Anathoth; God's diſcovery of it to him,* ver. 18, 19. *His prayer againſt them,* ver. 20. *and a prediction of God's judgments upon them for it,* ver. 21—23.

1. THE word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, ſaying, 2. Hear ye the words of this covenant, and ſpeak unto the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants Jeruſalem, 3. And ſay thou unto them, Thus ſaith the LORD God of Iſrael, Curſed *be* the man that obeyeth not the words of this covenant, 4. Which I commanded your fathers in the day *that* I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace, ſaying, Obey my voice, and do them, according to all which I command you: ſo ſhall ye be my people, and I will be your God: 5. That I may perform the oath which I have ſworn unto your fathers, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey, as *it is* this day. Then anſwered I, and ſaid, ſo be it, O LORD. 6. Then the LORD ſaid unto me, Proclaim all theſe words in the cities of Judah, and in the ſtreets of Jeruſalem, ſaying, Hear ye the words of this covenant, and do them. 7. For I earneſtly proteſted unto your fathers, in the day *that* I brought them up out of the land of Egypt, *even* unto this day, riſing early and proteſting, ſaying, Obey my voice. 8. Yet they obeyed not, nor inclined their ear, but walked every one in the imagination of their evil heart: therefore I will bring upon them all the words of this covenant, which I commanded *them* to do, but they did *them* not. 9. And the LORD ſaid unto me, A conſpiracy is found among the men of Judah, and among the inhabitants of Jeruſalem. 10. They are turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers, which refuſed to hear my words; and they went after other gods to ſerve them: the houſe of Iſrael and the houſe of Judah have broken my covenant which I made with their fathers.

The prophet here as proſecutor in God's name draws up an indictment againſt the Jews, for wilful diſobedience to the commands of their rightful ſovereign. And for the more ſolemn management of this charge,

1. He produceth the commiſſion he had to draw up the charge againſt them: he did not take pleaſure in accuſing the children of his people, but God commanded him to *ſpeak it to the men of Judah, ver.* 1, 2. In the original it is plural, *ſpeak ye this*; for what he ſaid to Jeremiah, was the ſame that he gave in charge to all his ſervants the prophets. They none of them ſaid any other, but what Moſes in the law had ſaid; to that therefore they muſt refer themſelves, and direct the people, *Hear the words of this covenant*; turn to your bibles, be judged by them. Jeremiah muſt now *proclaim this* in the *cities of Judah, and the ſtreets of Jeruſalem,* that all may hear, for all are concerned. All the words of reproof and conviction, which the prophets ſpake, were grounded upon the *words of the covenant,* and agreed with that; and therefore *hear theſe words,* and underſtand by them upon what terms you ſtood with God at firſt; and then by comparing your ſelves with the covenant, you will ſoon be aware upon what terms you now ſtand with him.

2. He opens the charter upon which their ſtate was founded, and by which they held their privileges. They had forgotten the tenor of it, and lived as if they thought the grant was abſolute, and that they might do what they pleaſed, and yet have what God had promiſed; or as if they thought the keeping up the ceremonial obſervances was all that God required of them. He therefore ſhews them with all poſſible plainneſs, that the thing God inſiſted upon was *obedience,* that was *better than ſacrifice.* He ſaid, *Obey my voice,* ver. 4. and again, *ver.* 7. *Obey my voice.* Own God for your maſter, give up yourſelves to him as his ſubjects and ſervants: attend to all the declarations of his mind and will, and make conſcience of complying with them. *Do my commandments,* not only in ſome things, but *according to all which I command you*; make conſcience of moral duties eſpecially, and reſt not in thoſe that are merely *ritual: Hear the words of the covenant, and do them.*

(1.) This was the original contract between God and them, when he firſt formed them into a people. It was what he *commanded their fathers,* when he firſt *brought them forth out of the land of Egypt,* ver. 4. and again, *ver.* 7. He never intended to take them under his conduct and protection upon any other terms. This was it that he required from them, in gratitude for the great things he did for them, when he brought them *from the iron furnace.* Therefore he redeemed them out of the ſervice of the Egyptians, which was perfect ſlavery, that he might take them into his own ſervice, which is perfect freedom, *Luke* i. 74, 75.

(2.) This was not only laid before them then, but it was with the greateſt importunity imaginable preſſed upon them, *ver.* 7. God not only commanded, but *earneſtly proteſted* it to their fathers, when he brought them into covenant with himſelf. Moſes inculcated it again and again, by precept upon precept, and line upon line.

(3.) This was made the condition of the relation between them and God, which was ſo much their honour and privilege, *So ſhall ye be my people, and I will be your God*; I will own you for mine, and you may call upon me as yours; which intimates, that if they refuſed to obey, they could no longer claim the benefit of the relation.

(4.) It was upon theſe terms that the land of Canaan was given them for a poſſeſſion; *Obey my voice, that I may perform the oath ſworn to your fathers, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey,* ver. 5. God was ready to fulfil the promiſe, but then they muſt fulfil the condition; if not, the promiſe is void, and it is juſt with God to turn them out of poſſeſſion. Being brought in upon their good behaviour, they had no wrong done them if they were turned out upon their ill behaviour. *Obedience* was the rent reſerved by the leaſe, with a power to re-enter for non-payment.

(5.) This obedience was not only made a condition of the bleſſing, but was required under the penalty of a curſe. This is mentioned firſt here, *ver.* 3. that they might if poſſible be awakened by the terrors of the Lord, *Curſed be the man,* though it were but a ſingle perſon, *that obeys not the words of this covenant,* much more when it is the body of the nation that rebels. There are curſes of the covenant as well as bleſſings; and Moſes ſet before them not only *life and good,* but *death and evil,* Deut. xxx. 15. So that they had fair warning given them of the fatal conſequences of diſobedience.

(6.) Leſt this covenant ſhould be forgotten, and becauſe *out of mind* ſhould be thought *out of date,* God had from time to time called to them to remember it, and by his ſervants the prophets had made a *continual claim* of this rent; ſo that they could not plead in excuſe of their non-payment, that it had never been demanded; from the day he brought them out of Egypt to this day, (and that was near 1000 years) he had been in one way or other, *at ſundry times and in divers manners, proteſting to them* the neceſſity of obedience. God keeps an account how long we have enjoyed the means of grace, and how powerful thoſe means have been; how often we have been not only ſpoken to, but *proteſted to* concerning our duty.

(7.) This covenant was conſented to, *ver.* 5. *Then anſwered I, and ſaid, Amen, ſo be it, O Lord.* Theſe are the words of the prophet, expreſſing either, (1.) His own conſent to the covenant *for himſelf,* and his deſire to have the benefit of it. God promiſed Canaan to the obedient; Lord, ſaith he, I take thee at thy word, I will be obedient: let me have mine inheritance in the land of promiſe, of which Canaan is a type. Or, (2.) His good will and good wiſh, that his people might have the benefit of it; *Amen.* Lord, let them ſtill be kept in poſſeſſion of this good land, and not turned out of it; make good the promiſe to them. Or, (3.) His people's conſent to the covenant; then anſwered I, in the name of the people, *ſo be it.* Taking it in this ſenſe, it refers to the declared conſent, which the people gave

gave to the covenant, not only to the precepts of it, when they ſaid, *All that the Lord ſhall ſay unto us we will do, and will be obedient*; but to the penalties, when they ſaid *Amen* to all the curſes upon mount Ebal. The more ſolemnly we have engaged our ſelves to God, the more reaſon we have to hope that it will be perpetual, and yet here it did not prove ſo.

3. He chargeth them with breach of covenant, ſuch a breach as amounted to a forfeiture of their charter, *ver.* 8. God had ſaid again and again by his law, and by his prophets, *Obey my voice*, do as you are bidden, and all ſhall be well, *yet they obeyed not*; and becauſe they were reſolved not to ſubmit their ſouls to God's commandments, they would not ſo much as *incline their ears* to them, but got as far as they could out of call; *they walked every one in the imagination of their evil heart*, followed their own inventions, every man did as his fancy and humour led him, right or wrong, lawful or unlawful, both in their devotions and in their converſations; ſee *chap.* vii. 24. And what then can they expect, but to fall under the curſe of the covenant, ſince they would not comply with the commands and conditions of it? *therefore I will bring upon them all the words of this covenant*, i. e. all the threatnings contained in it, becauſe *they did not what they were commanded*. Note, The *words of the covenant* ſhall not fall to the ground. If we do not by our obedience qualify our ſelves for the bleſſings of it, we ſhall by our diſobedience bring our ſelves under the curſes of it.

And that which aggravated their defection from God, and rebellion againſt him was, that it was *general*, and as it were *by conſent*, ver. 9, 10. Jeremiah himſelf ſaw that many lived in open diſobedience to God, but the Lord told him the matter was worſe than he thought of; *a conſpiracy is found among them*, by him whoſe eye is upon the hidden works of darkneſs. There is a *combination* againſt God and religion, a dangerous deſign formed to overthrow God's government, and bring in the pretenders, the counterfeit deities. This intimates, that they were *wilful* and *deliberate* in wickedneſs; they rebelled againſt God, not through incogitancy, but preſumptuouſly, and with a high hand; that they were *ſubtle* and *ingenious* in wickedneſs, and carried on their plot againſt religion with a great deal of art and management; that they were *linked together* in the deſigns, and, as is uſual among conſpirators, engaged to ſtand by one another in it, and to live and die together; they were reſolved to go through with it. A curſed conſpiracy! O that there were not the like in our day! Obſerve, (1.) What the conſpiracy was: they deſigned to overthrow divine revelation, and ſet that aſide, and perſwade people not to *hear*, not to *heed*, *the words of God*. They did all they could to derogate from the authority of the ſcriptures, and to leſſen the value of them: they deſigned to draw people *after other gods to ſerve them*, to conſult them as their oracles, and make court to them as their benefactors. Human reaſon ſhall be their God, a light within their God, an infallible judge their God, ſaints and angels their gods, the god of this or the other nation ſhall be theirs; thus under ſeveral diſguiſes they are in the ſame confederacy *againſt the Lord and againſt his anointed*. (2.) Who were in the conſpiracy; one would have expected to find ſome foreigners ring-leaders in it. No, (1.) The *inhabitants of Jeruſalem* are in conſpiracy with the *men of Judah*; city and country agree in this, however they muſt differ in other things. (2.) Thoſe of this generation ſeem to be in conſpiracy with thoſe of the foregoing generation, to carry on the war from age to age againſt religion; *They are turned back to the iniquities of their fore-fathers*, and are riſen up in their ſtead a *ſeed of evil doers*, an *increaſe of ſinful men*, Numb. xxxii. 14. In Joſiah's time there had been a reformation, but after his death they returned to the idolatries which then they had renounced. (3.) Judah and Iſrael, the kingdom of the ten tribes and the two, that were often at daggers drawing one with another, yet were *in a conſpiracy* to *break the covenant* God had made with their fathers, even with the heads of all the twelve tribes. The *houſe of Iſrael* began the revolt, but the *houſe of Judah* ſoon came into *the conſpiracy*. Now what elſe could be expected, but that God ſhould take ſevere methods, both for the chaſtiſing of theſe conſpirators, and the cruſhing of this conſpiracy; for none ever hardened his heart thus againſt God, and proſpered. He that rolleth this ſtone, it will return upon him.

11. ¶ Therefore thus ſaith the LORD, Behold, I will bring evil upon them which they ſhall not be able to eſcape; and though they ſhall cry unto me, I will not hearken unto them. 12. Then ſhall the cities of Judah, and inhabitants of Jeruſalem go, and cry unto the gods unto whom they offer incenſe; but they ſhall not ſave them at all in the time of their trouble. 13. For *according* to the number of thy cities were thy gods, O Judah; and *according* to the number of the ſtreets of Jeruſalem, have ye ſet up altars to *that* ſhameful thing, *even* altars to burn incenſe unto Baal. 14. Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up a cry or prayer for them: for I will not hear *them* in the time that they cry unto me for their trouble. 15. What hath my beloved to do in mine houſe, *ſeeing* ſhe hath wrought lewdneſs with many? and the holy fleſh is paſſed from thee: when thou doeſt evil, then thou rejoiceſt. 16. The LORD called thy name, A green olive-tree, fair *and* of goodly fruit: with the noiſe of a great tumult he hath kindled fire upon it, and the branches of it are broken. 17. For the LORD of hoſts, that planted thee, hath pronounced evil againſt thee, for the evil of the houſe of Iſrael, and of the houſe of Judah, which they have done againſt themſelves to provoke me to anger, in offering incenſe unto Baal.

This paragraph, which contains ſo much of God's wrath, might very well be expected to follow upon that which goes next before, which contained ſo much of his peoples ſin. When God found ſo much *evil among them*, we cannot think it ſtrange if it follows, *Therefore I will bring evil upon them*, ver. 11. the evil of puniſhment for the evil of ſin, and there is no remedy, no relief, the decree is gone forth, and the ſentence will be executed.

1. They *cannot help themſelves*, but will be found too weak to conteſt with God's judgments; it is *evil which they ſhall not be able to eſcape*, or to *go forth out of*, by any evaſion whatſoever. Note, Thoſe that will not ſubmit to God's government, ſhall not be able to eſcape his wrath. There is no fleeing from his juſtice, no avoiding his cognizance. Evil purſues ſinners, and entangles them in ſnares out of which they cannot extricate themſelves.

2. Their *God will not help them*, his providence ſhall no way favour them, *tho' they ſhall cry unto me, I will not hearken unto them*. In their affliction they will *ſeek* the God whom before they *ſlighted*, and *cry to* him whom before they would not vouchſafe to *ſpeak to*. But how can they expect to ſpeed? For he has plainly told us, that he that *turns away his ears from hearing the law*, as they did, *ver.* 8. for they *inclined not their ear*, even their *prayer* ſhall be an *abomination* to him, as the word of the Lord was now to them a *reproach*.

3. Their *idols ſhall not help* them, *ver.* 12. They ſhall *go and cry to the gods to whom they* now *offer incenſe*, and put them in mind of the coſtly ſervices wherewith they had honoured them, expecting they ſhould *now* have relief from them, but in vain: they ſhall be ſent to the *gods whom they ſerved*, Judg. x. 4. Deut. xxxii. 37, 38. and what the better? *They ſhall not ſave them at all*, ſhall do nothing towards their ſalvation, nor give them any proſpect of it; they ſhall not afford them the leaſt comfort or relief, or mitigation of their trouble. It is God only that is a friend at need, a preſent powerful help *in time of trouble*. The idols cannot help themſelves, how then ſhould they help their worſhippers? Thoſe that make idols of the world and the fleſh, will in vain have recourſe to them in a day of diſtreſs. If the idols could have done any real kindneſs to their worſhippers, they would have done it for this people, who had renounced the true God to embrace them, had multiplied them *according to the number of their cities*, ver. 13. nay, in Jeruſalem, *according to the number of their ſtreets*, ſuſpecting both their ſufficiency and their readineſs to help them, they muſt have *many*, leſt a few would not ſerve; they muſt have them diſperſed in every corner, leſt they ſhould be out of the way when they had occaſion for them. In Jeruſalem, the city which God had choſen to put his name, there, publickly in *the ſtreets* of Jeruſalem, in every ſtreet they had *altars to that ſhameful thing*, that *ſhame*, even to Baal, which they ought to have been aſhamed of, with which they did reproach the Lord, and bring confuſion upon themſelves. But now in their diſtreſs their many gods, and many altars, ſhould ſtand them in no ſtead. Note, Thoſe that will not be aſhamed of their commiſſion of ſin as a wicked thing, will be aſhamed of their expectations from ſin as a fruitleſs thing.

4. *Jeremiah's prayers ſhall not help them*, ver. 14. what God had ſaid to him before, *chap.* vii. 16. he here ſaith again, *pray not thou for this people*. This is not deſigned for a command to the prophet, ſo much as for a threatning to the people, that they ſhould have no benefit by the prayers of their friends for them. God would give no encouragement to the prophets to pray for them, would not ſtir up the Spirit of prayer, but caſt a damp upon it, would put into their hearts to pray not for the body of the people, but for the remnant among them, to pray for their eternal ſalvation, not for their deliverance from the temporal judgments that were coming upon them: and what other prayers were put up for them ſhould *not* be *heard*. Thoſe are in a ſad caſe indeed that are cut off from the benefit of prayer. *I will not hear them when they cry*, and therefore do not thou pray for them. Note, Thoſe that have ſo far thrown themſelves

selves out of God's favour, that he will not hear their prayers, cannot expect benefit by the prayers of others for them.

5. The *profession* they make *of religion*, shall stand them in *no stead*, ver. 15. They were originally God's *beloved*, his spouse, he was married to them by the covenant of peculiarity, even the unbelieving Jews are said to be *beloved for the fathers sakes*, Rom. xi. 28. As such they had a place *in God's house*, they were admitted to worship in the courts of his temple, they did partake of God's altar, did eat of the flesh of their peace-offerings, here called the *holy flesh*, which God had the honour of, and they had the comfort of. This they gloried in, and trusted to: What harm could come to those who were God's beloved, who were under the protection of his house? Even when they *did evil*, yet *they rejoiced* and gloried in this, made a mighty noise of this: And when *their evil was*, so the margin reads it, when trouble came upon them they *rejoiced in this*, and made this their confidence: But their confidence would deceive them, for God has rejected it, they themselves having forfeited the privileges they so much boasted of: They have *wrought lewdness with many*, have been guilty of spiritual whoredom, have worshipped many idols. And therefore, (1.) God's temple will *yield them no protection*, it is fit the adulteress, especially when she has so oft repeated her whoredoms, and is grown so impudent in them, and irreclaimable, should be *put away*, and turned out of doors; *What has my beloved to do in my house?* She is a scandal to it, and therefore it shall be no longer a shelter to her. (2.) God's altar will *yield them no satisfaction*, nor can they expect any comfort from that: *the holy flesh is passed from thee*, i. e. an end will soon be put to thy sacrifices, when the temple shall be laid in ruins; and where then will the holy flesh be, thou art so proud of? A holy heart will be a comfort to us when the *holy flesh is passed from us*; an inward principle of grace will make up the want of the outward means of grace: But wo unto us if the departure of the *holy flesh* be accompanied with the departure of the *holy Spirit*.

6. God's *former favours* to them shall stand them in no stead, *ver.* 16, 17. Their remembrance of them shall be no comfort to them under their troubles, and God's remembrance of them shall be no argument for their relief. (1.) It is true God had done *great things for them*; that people had been favourites above any people under the sun, they had been the darlings of heaven, God *had called* Israel's *name, a green olive-tree*, and had made them so, for he miscals nothing; he had *planted* them, *ver.* 17. had formed them into a people, with all the advantages they could have to make them a *fruitful* and *flourishing* people, so good was their law, and so good was their land. One would think no other, but that a people so planted, so watered, so cultivated, should be, as the *olive-tree* is, *ever green*, in respect both of piety and prosperity, *Psal.* lii. 8. God called them *fair*, and of *goodly fruit*; both *good for food*, and *pleasant to the eye*; both *amiable* and *serviceable* to God and man, for with the *greenness* and *fatness* of the olive both are *honoured*, Judg. ix. 9. (2.) It is as true that they have done *ill things against God*; he had planted them a green olive, a good olive, but they were degenerated into a *wild olive*, Rom. xi. 17. Both *the house of Israel* and the *house of Judah* had *done evil*, had *provoked God to anger in burning incense unto Baal*, setting up other mediators between them and the supreme God beside the promised Messiah; nay, setting up other gods in competition with the true and living God, for they had *gods many*, as well as *lords many*. (3.) When they have carried themselves so ill, they can expect no other, but that notwithstanding what good he hath both *done to them*, and *designed for them*, he should now *bring upon them the evil he hath pronounced against them*. He that *made them* will not *save them*. He that *planted* this *green olive-tree*, and expected fruit from it, finding it barren and grown wild, hath *kindled fire upon it*, to burn it as it stands, for being *without fruit*, it is *twice dead, plucked up by the roots*, Jude 12. it is *cut down, and cast into the fire*, the fittest place for trees that cumber the ground, *Mat.* iii. 10. The *branches of it*, the *high and lofty boughs*, so the word signifies, are *broken*, are *broken down*, both princes and priests cut off. And thus it proves, that the evil done against God *to provoke him to anger*, is really done *against themselves*, they *wrong their own souls*; God is out of their reach, but they ruin themselves. See *chap.* vii. 19. Note, Every sin against God is a sin against ourselves, and so it will be found sooner or later.

18. ¶ And the LORD hath given me knowledge *of it*, and I know *it*, then thou shewedst me their doings. 19. But I *was* like a lamb, *or* an ox *that* is brought to the slaughter, and I knew not that they had devised devices against me, *saying*, Let us destroy the tree with the fruit thereof, and let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name may be no more remembred. 20. But, O LORD of hosts, that judgest righteously, that triest the reins and the heart, let me see thy vengeance on them; for unto thee have I revealed my cause. 21. Therefore thus saith the LORD of the men of Anathoth that seek thy life, saying, Prophesy not in the name of the LORD, that thou die not by our hand: 22. Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, Behold, I will punish them; the young men shall die by the sword, their sons and their daughters shall die by famine. 23. And there shall be no remnant of them, for I will bring evil upon the men of Anathoth, *even* the year of their visitation.

The prophet Jeremiah hath much in his writings concerning *himself*, much more than Isaiah had, the times he lived in being very troublesome. Here we have (as it should seem) the *beginning of his sorrows*, which arose from those of his own city, Anathoth, a priests city, and yet a *malignant* one. Observe here,

1. Their plot against him, *ver.* 19. They *devised devices against him*, laid their heads together to contrive how they might be in the most plausible and effectual manner the death of him. Malice is ingenious in its devices, as well as industrious in its prosecutions. They said concerning Jeremiah, *Let us destroy the tree with the fruit thereof*; a proverbial expression; Let us utterly destroy him, root and branch: Let us destroy both the father and the family, as when Naboth was put to death for treason, *his sons* were put to death with him. Or rather, both *the prophet and the prophecy*; let us kill the one, and defeat the other: *Let us cut him off from the land of the living*, as a false prophet, and load him with ignominy and disgrace, *that his name may be no more remembred* with respect. Let us sink his reputation, and so spoil the credit of his predictions. This was their plot; and, (1.) It was a *barbarous* one; but so cruel have the persecutors of God's prophets been: They *hunt for* no less than *the precious life*, and very precious the lives are that they hunt for. But, (2.) It was a *baffled* one. They thought to put an end to his days, but he survived most of his enemies; they thought to blast his memory, but it lives to this day, and will be blessed while time lasts.

2. The information which God gave him of this conspiracy against him. He knew nothing of it himself, so artfully had they concealed it; he came to Anathoth, *meaning* no harm to them, and therefore *fearing* no harm from them, *like a lamb or an ox*, that thinks he is driven as usual to the field, when he is *brought to the slaughter*; so little did poor Jeremiah dream of the design his citizens that hated him had upon him: None of his friends could, and none of his enemies would, give him any notice of his danger, that he might shift for his own safety; as Paul's sister's son gave him intelligence of the Jews that were lying in wait for him. There is but a step between Jeremiah and death; but then *the Lord has given me knowledge of it*, by dream, or vision, or impression upon his spirit, that he might save himself as the king of Israel did upon the notice Elisha gave him, 2 *Kings* vi. 10. Thus he came to *know it*, God *shews him their doings*; and such were their devices, that the discovering of them was the defeating of them. If God had not let him know his own danger, it would have been improved by unreasonable men against the reputation of his predictions, that he who foretold the ruin of his country, could not foresee his own peril, and avoid it. See what care God takes of his prophets; he *suffers no man to do them wrong*; all the rage of their enemies cannot prevail to take them off, till they have *finished their testimony*. God knows all the secret designs of his and his peoples enemies, and can when he pleaseth make them know: *A bird of the air shall carry the voice.*

3. His appeal to God hereupon, *ver.* 20. His eye is to God as *the Lord of hosts*, that *judgeth righteously*. It is matter of comfort to us, when men deal unjustly with us, that we have a God to go to, who doth and will plead the cause of injured innocency, and appear against the injurious. God's justice, which is a terror to the wicked, is a comfort to the godly. His eye is to him, as the God that *tries the reins and the heart*; that perfectly sees what is in man, what are his thoughts and intents. He knew the integrity that was in Jeremiah's heart, and that he was not the man they represented him to be: He knew the wickedness that was in their hearts, though never so cunningly concealed and disguised. Now, (1.) He prays judgment against them: *Let me see thy vengeance on them*, i. e. do justice between me and them in such a way as thou pleasest. Some think there was something of human frailty in this prayer of his; at least Christ has taught us another lesson, both by his precept and pattern, which is to pray for our persecutors. Others think it comes from a pure zeal for the glory of God, and a pious prophetick indignation against men that were by profession priests, the Lord's ministers, and yet were so desperately wicked, as to fly out against one that did them no harm, purely for the

ſervice he did to God. This petition was a prediction that he ſhould *ſee God's vengeance* on them. (2.) He refers himſelf entirely to the judgment of God; *Unto thee have I revealed my cauſe*, i. e. To thee I have committed it, not deſiring or expecting to intereſt any other in it. Note, It is our comfort when we are wronged, that we have a God to commit our cauſe to; and our duty to commit it to him, with a reſolution to acquieſce in his definitive ſentence; to *ſubſcribe*, and not *preſcribe*, to him.

4. Judgment given againſt his perſecutors, the *men of Anathoth*. It was to no purpoſe for him to appeal to the courts at Jeruſalem, he could not have right done him there, the prieſts there would ſtand by the prieſts at Anathoth, and rather ſecond them than diſcountenance them; but God will therefore take cognizance of the cauſe himſelf, and we are ſure *his judgment is according to truth*.

Here is, 1. Their crime recited, on which the ſentence is grounded, *ver.* 21. They *ſought the prophet's life*, for they forbid him to *propheſy* upon *pain of death*; they were reſolved either to *ſilence* him, or *ſlay* him. The provocation he gave them was his *propheſying in the name of the Lord*, without licence from them that were the governors of the city, which he was a member of; and not propheſying ſuch ſmooth things as they always beſpoke. Their forbidding him to propheſy, was in effect *ſeeking his life*; for it was ſeeking to defeat the end and buſineſs of his life, and to rob him of the comfort of it. It is as bad to God's faithful miniſters to have their *mouth ſtopped*, as to have their *breath ſtopped*. But eſpecially when it was reſolved, that if he did propheſy, as certainly he would notwithſtanding their inhibition, he ſhould *die by their hand*; they would be accuſers, judges, executioners and all. It uſed to be ſaid, that *a prophet could not periſh, but at Jeruſalem*, for there the great council ſat; but ſo bitter were the men of Anathoth againſt Jeremiah, that they would undertake to be the death of him themſelves. A prophet then ſhall find not only *no honour*, but no favour in his own country.

2. The ſentence paſſed upon them for this crime, *ver.* 22, 23. God ſaith, *I will puniſh them*; let me alone to deal with them, *I will viſit* this *upon them*, ſo the word is; God will enquire into it, and reckon for it. Two of God's four ſore judgments ſhall ſerve to ruin their town: The *ſword* ſhall devour their *young men*, though they were young prieſts, not men of war; their character ſhall not be their protection. And *famine* ſhall deſtroy the children, *ſons and daughters*, that tarry at home; which is a more grievous death than that by *the ſword*, Lam. iv. 9. The deſtruction ſhall be final, *ver.* 23. *there ſhall be no remnant of them left*, none to be the ſeed of another generation; they ſought Jeremiah's life, and therefore they ſhall *die*; they would deſtroy him *root and branch*, that *his name* might be *no more remembred*, and therefore there ſhall be *no remnant of them*; and herein *the Lord is righteous*. Thus *evil* is *brought upon* them, even *the year of their viſitation*; and that is *evil* enough, a recompence according to their deſerts. Then ſhall Jeremiah *ſee his deſire upon his enemies*. Note, their condition is ſad, that have the prayers of good miniſters and good people againſt them.

CHAP. XII.

In this chapter we have, (1.) The prophet's humble complaint to God of the ſucceſs that wicked people had in their wicked practices, ver. 1, 2. *and his appeal to God concerning his own integrity*, ver. 3. *with a prayer that God would for the ſake of the publick bring the wickedneſs of the wicked to an end*, ver. 3, 4. (2.) *God's rebuke to the prophet for his uneaſineſs at his preſent troubles, bidding him prepare for greater*, ver. 5, 6. (3.) *A ſad lamentation of the preſent deplorable ſtate of the Iſrael of God*, ver. 7—13. (4.) *An intimation of mercy to God's people in a denunciation of wrath againſt their neighbours that helped forward their affliction, that they ſhould be plucked out; but with a promiſe, that if they would at laſt join themſelves with the people of God, they ſhould come in ſharers with them in their privileges*, ver. 14—17.

1. RIghteous *art* thou, O LORD, when I plead with thee: *yet* let me talk with thee of *thy* judgments: Wherefore doth the way of the wicked proſper? *wherefore* are all they happy that deal very treacherouſly? 2. Thou haſt planted them, yea, they have taken root: they grow, yea, they bring forth fruit; thou *art* near in their mouth, and far from their reins. 3. But thou, O LORD, knoweſt me; thou haſt ſeen me, and tried mine heart towards thee: pull them out like ſheep for the ſlaughter, and prepare them for the day of ſlaughter. 4. How long ſhall the land mourn, and the herbs of every field wither, for the wickedneſs of them that dwell therein? the beaſts are conſumed, and the birds, becauſe they ſaid, He ſhall not ſee our laſt end. 5. ¶ If thou haſt run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canſt thou contend with horſes, and if in the land of peace *wherein* thou truſtedſt *they wearied thee*, then how wilt thou do in the ſwelling of Jordan? 6. For even thy brethren, and the houſe of thy father, even they have dealt treacherouſly with thee, yea, they have called a multitude after thee; believe them not, though they ſpeak fair words unto thee.

The prophet doubts not but it would be of uſe to others, to know what had paſſed between God and his ſoul; what temptations he had been aſſaulted with, and how he had got over them: And therefore he here tells us,

1. What liberty he humbly took, and was graciouſly allowed him to reaſon with God concerning his judgments, *ver.* 1. He is about to *plead with God*, not to quarrel with him, or find fault with his proceedings, but to enquire into the meaning of them, that he might more and more ſee reaſon to be ſatisfied in them, and might have wherewith to anſwer both his own and others objections againſt them. The works of the Lord, and the reaſons of them, are *ſought out* even of thoſe that have *pleaſure therein*, Pſal. cxi. 2. We may not *ſtrive with our Maker*, but we may *reaſon* with him. Now, (1.) The prophet lays down a truth of unqueſtionable certainty, which he reſolves to abide by in managing this argument, *Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee.* Thus he arms himſelf againſt the temptation wherewith he was aſſaulted, to envy the proſperity of the wicked, before he entred into a parley with it. Note, When we are moſt in the dark concerning the meaning of God's diſpenſations, yet ſtill we muſt reſolve to keep up right thoughts of God, and muſt be confident of this, that he never did nor ever will do the leaſt wrong to any of his creatures; even when his *judgments* are *unſearchable* as a *great deep*, and altogether unaccountable, yet *his righteouſneſs* is as conſpicuous and unmoveable as *the great mountains*, Pſal. xxxvi. 6. Though ſometimes *clouds and darkneſs are round about him*, yet *juſtice and judgment* are always the *habitation of his throne*, Pſal xcvii. 2. When we find it hard to underſtand particular providences, we muſt have recourſe to general truths as our firſt principles, and abide by them; however it be, *the Lord is righteous*, ſee *Pſal.* lxxiii. 1. And we muſt acknowledge it *to him*, as the prophet here, even when we *plead with him*, as thoſe that have no thoughts of contending, but of learning, being fully aſſured, that he *will be juſtified when he ſpeaks*. Note, However we may ſee cauſe for our own information to *plead with God*, yet it becomes us to own, that whatever he ſaith or doth, he is *in the right*.

2. What it was in the diſpenſations of divine providence that he ſtumbled at, and that he thought would bear a debate: It was that which has been a temptation to many wiſe and good men, and ſuch a one as they had hardly got over. (1.) They ſee the deſigns and projects of wicked people ſucceſsful, *the way of the wicked proſpers*; they compaſs their malicious deſigns, and gain their point. (2.) They ſee their affairs and concerns in a good poſture; *they are happy*, happy as the world can make them, tho' *they deal treacherouſly, very treacherouſly*, both with God and man. They are hypocrites who are chiefly meant, as appears, *ver.* 2. who *diſſemble* in their good profeſſions, and *depart* from their good beginnings and good promiſes, and in both they deal treacherouſly, very treacherouſly. It has been ſaid, that men cannot expect to proſper, who are unjuſt and diſhoneſt in their dealings; but theſe deal treacherouſly, and yet *they are happy*.

He ſhews, *ver.* 2. both their proſperity and their abuſe of their proſperity. (1.) God had been very indulgent to them, and they were got before-hand in the world: They are *planted* in a good land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and *thou haſt planted them*; nay, thou didſt *caſt out the heathen* to plant them, *Pſal.* xliv. 2.—lxxx. 8. Many a tree is planted, that yet never grows, or comes to any thing; but *they have taken root*, their proſperity ſeems to be confirmed and ſettled; they take root in the earth, for there they fix themſelves, and thence they draw the ſap of all their ſatisfaction. Yet many trees take root, which yet never come on; but theſe *grow*, yea, *they bring forth fruit*; their families are built up, they live high, and ſpend at a great rate; and all this was owing to the benignity of the divine providence, which ſmiled upon them, *Pſal.* lxxiii. 7. (2.) Thus God had favoured them, tho' they had dealt *treacherouſly* with him: *thou art near in their mouth, and far from their reins.* This was no uncharitable cenſure, for he ſpoke by the Spirit of prophecy, without which it is not ſafe to charge men with hypocriſy, whoſe appearances are plauſible. Obſerve, (1.) Though they cared not for

for *thinking* of God, nor had any ſincere affection to him, yet they could eaſily perſuade themſelves to *ſpeak* of him frequently, and with an air of ſerioufneſs. Piety from the teeth outward is no difficult thing. Many ſpeak the language of Iſrael, that are not Iſraelites indeed. (2.) Though they had on all occaſions the name of God ready in their mouth, and accuſtomed themſelves to thoſe forms of ſpeech that ſavoured of piety, yet they could not perſuade themſelves to keep up the fear of God in their hearts. The form of godlineſs ſhould engage us to keep up the power of it; but with them it did not do ſo.

3. What comfort he had in appealing to God concerning his own integrity, *ver.* 3. *but thou, O Lord, knoweſt me.* Probably the wicked men he complains of were forward to reproach and cenſure him, *chap.* xviii. 18. in reference to which, this was his comfort, that God was a witneſs of his integrity. God knew he was not ſuch a one as *they were*, who had God *never in their mouths, but far from their reins*; nor ſuch a one as they took him to be, and repreſented him, a deceiver and a falſe prophet; they that thus abuſed him, did not know him, 1 *Cor.* ii. 8. *But thou, O Lord, knoweſt me*, though they think me not worth their notice. (1.) Obſerve what the matter is, concerning which he appeals to God, thou knoweſt *my heart towards thee.* Note, We are as our hearts are, and our hearts are good or bad, according as they are, or are not, *towards God*; and this is that therefore concerning which we ſhould examine our ſelves, that we may approve our ſelves to God. (2.) The cognizance to which he appeals. *Thou knoweſt me* better than I know my ſelf, not by hearſay or report, for *thou haſt ſeen me*, not with a tranſient glance, but thou haſt *tried my heart.* God's knowing of us is as clear, and exact, and certain, as if he had made the moſt ſtrict ſcrutiny. Note, The God with whom we have to do, perfectly knows how our *hearts* are *towards him.* He knows both the guile of the hypocrite, and the ſincerity of the upright.

4. He prays that God would turn his hand againſt theſe wicked people, and not ſuffer them to proſper always, though they had proſpered long. Let ſome judgment come to *pull them out* of this fat paſture as *ſheep for the ſlaughter*, that it may appear their long proſperity was but like the feeding of lambs in a large place, to *prepare them for the day of ſlaughter*, Hoſ. iv. 16. God ſuffered them to proſper, that by their pride and luxury they might fill up the meaſure of their iniquity, and ſo be ripened for deſtruction, and therefore he thinks it a piece of neceſſary juſtice, that they ſhould fall into miſchief themſelves, becauſe they had done ſo much miſchief to others, that they ſhould be *pulled out* of their land, becauſe they had brought ruin upon the land, and the longer they continued in it, the more hurt they did, as the plagues of their generation, *ver.* 4. *How long ſhall the land mourn*, as it doth under the judgments of God inflicted upon it, *for the wickedneſs of them that dwell therein?* Lord, ſhall they proſper themſelves that ruin all about them? (1.) See here what the judgment was which the land was now groaning under. *The herbs of every field wither*, the graſs is burnt up, and all the products of the earth fail; and then it follows of courſe, *the beaſts are conſumed, and the birds*, 1 Kings xviii. 5. This was the effect of a long drought, or want of rain, which happened, as it ſhould ſeem, at the latter end of Joſiah's reign, and the beginning of Jehoiakim's, it is mentioned, *chap.* iii. 3. — viii. 13. — ix. 10, 12. and more fully afterwards, *chap.* xiv. If they would have been brought to repentance by this leſſer judgment, the greater had been prevented. Now, why was it that this *fruitful land* was *turned into barrenneſs*, but *for the wickedneſs of them that dwelt therein?* Pſal. cvii. 34. Therefore the prophet prays that theſe wicked people might *die for their own ſin*; and that the whole *nation* might not ſuffer for it. (2.) See here what was the language of their wickedneſs: *They ſaid, he ſhall not ſee our laſt end*; either God himſelf ſhall not: Atheiſm is the root of hypocriſy, therefore God is *far from their reins*, though *near in their mouth*, becauſe they ſay, *how doth God know?* Pſal. lxxiii. 11. *Job* xxii. 13. He knows not what way we take, nor what it will end in. Or, Jeremiah *ſhall not ſee our laſt end*; whatever he pretends when he asks us what ſhall be in the end hereof, he cannot himſelf foreſee it: They look upon him as a falſe prophet. Or, whatever it is, he ſhall not live to ſee it, for we will be the death of him, *chap.* xi. 21. Note, (1.) Mens ſetting their latter end at a great diſtance, or looking upon it as uncertain, is at the bottom of all their wickedneſs, *Lam.* i. 9. (2.) The whole creation groans under the burthen of the ſin of man, *Rom.* viii. 22. It is for this that *the earth mourns*, ſo it may be read, *curſed is the ground for thy ſake.*

5. He acquaints us with the anſwer God gave to thoſe complaints of his, *ver.* 5, 6. We often find the prophets admoniſhed, whoſe buſineſs it was to admoniſh others, as *Iſa.* viii. 11. Miniſters have leſſons to learn, as well as leſſons to teach, and muſt themſelves hear God's voice, and preach to themſelves. Jeremiah complained much of the wickedneſs of the men of Anathoth; and that, notwithſtanding that, they proſpered. Now this ſeems to be an anſwer to that complaint. (1.) It is allowed that he had cauſe to complain, *ver.* 6. *Thy brethren*, the prieſts of Anathoth, that are of *the houſe of thy father*, who ought to have protected thee, and pretended to do ſo, *even they have dealt treacherouſly with thee*, have been falſe to thee, and under colour of friendſhip, have deſignedly done thee all the miſchief they could: they *have called a multitude after thee*, raiſed the mob upon thee, and incenſed the common people againſt thee, to whom they have endeavoured by all arts poſſible to render thee deſpicable or odious, while at the ſame time they pretended they had no deſign to perſecute thee, or deprive thee of thy liberty: They are indeed ſuch as thou *canſt not believe*, though they *ſpeak fair words to thee*: They ſeem to be thy friends, but are really thine enemies. Note, God's faithful ſervants muſt not think it at all ſtrange if their foes be *thoſe of their own houſe*, Mat. x. 36. and if thoſe they expect kindneſs from prove ſuch as they can put no confidence in, *Mic.* vii. 5. (2.) Yet he is told that he carried the matter too far. (1.) He laid the unkindneſs of his country-men too much to heart. They *wearied him*, becauſe it was *in a land of peace wherein he truſted*, ver. 5. It was very grievous to him to be thus hated and abuſed by his own kindred: He was *diſturbed in his mind* by it, his ſpirit was ſunk and overwhelmed with it, ſo that he was in a mighty toſs and uneaſineſs about it: Nay, he was diſcouraged in his work by it, began to be weary of propheſying, and to think of giving it up. (2.) He did not conſider that this was but the *beginning of his ſorrow*, and he had ſorer trials yet before him; and whereas he ſhould endeavour by a patient bearing of this trouble, to prepare himſelf for greater; by his uneaſineſs under this, he did but diſ-fit himſelf for what further lay before him. *If thou haſt run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee*, and run thee quite out of breath, then *how wilt thou contend with horſes?* If the injuries done him by the men of Anathoth made ſuch an impreſſion upon him, what would he do when the princes and chief prieſts at Jeruſalem ſhould ſet upon him with their power, as they did afterwards, *chap.* xx. 2. — xxxii. 2. If he was ſo ſoon tired in *a land of peace*, where there was little noiſe or peril, *what would he do in the ſwellings of Jordan*, when that overflows all its banks, and frightens even lions out of their thickets, *chap.* xlix. 19. Note, (1.) While we are in this world we muſt expect troubles and difficulties. Our life is a race, a warfare, we are in danger of being *run down.* (2.) God's uſual method being to begin with leſſer trials, it is our wiſdom to expect greater than any we have yet met with. We may be called out to *contend with horſemen*, and the ſons of Anak may perhaps be reſerved for the laſt encounter. (3.) It highly concerns us to prepare for ſuch trials, and to conſider *what we ſhould do* in them. How ſhall we preſerve our integrity and peace, when we come to the *ſwellings of Jordan.* (4.) In order to our preparation for farther and greater trials, we are concerned to approve our ſelves well in preſent leſſer trials, to keep up our ſpirits, keep hold of the promiſe, keep in our way, with our eye upon the prize, ſo run that we may obtain it.

Some good interpreters underſtand this as ſpoken to the people who were very ſecure, and fearleſs of the threatned judgments: If they have been ſo humbled and impoveriſhed by leſſer calamities, waſted by the Aſſyrians; if the Ammonites and Moabites that were their *brethren*, and with whom they were *in league*; if theſe proved falſe to them, as undoubtedly they would, then how would they be able to deal with ſuch a powerful adverſary as the Chaldeans would be? How would they bear up their head againſt that invaſion, which ſhould come like *the ſwelling of Jordan.*

7. ¶ I have forſaken mine houſe, I have left mine heritage, I have given the dearly beloved of my ſoul into the hands of her enemies. 8. Mine heritage is unto me as a lion in a foreſt, it crieth out againſt me: therefore have I hated it. 9. Mine heritage *is* unto me *as* a ſpeckled bird, the birds round about *are* againſt her; come ye, aſſemble all the beaſts of the field, come to devour. 10. Many paſtors have deſtroyed my vineyard, they have trodden my portion under foot, they have made my pleaſant portion a deſolate wilderneſs. 11. They have made it deſolate, *and being* deſolate it mourneth unto me; the whole land is made deſolate, becauſe no man layeth *it* to heart. 12. The ſpoilers are come upon all high places through the wilderneſs: for the ſword of the LORD ſhall devour from the *one* end of the land even to the *other* end of the land: no fleſh ſhall have peace. 13. They have ſown wheat, but ſhall reap thorns: they have put themſelves to pain, *but* ſhall not profit: and they ſhall be aſhamed of your revenues, becauſe of the fierce anger of the LORD.

The people of the Jews are here marked for ruin. 1. God is here brought in *falling out with them*, and *leaving* them *deſolate*; and they could never have been undone if they had not provoked God to deſert them. It is a terrible word that God here ſaith,

ſaith, *ver.* 7. *I have forſaken my houſe*, the temple, which had been his palace, they had polluted it, and ſo forced him out of it, *I have left mine heritage*, and will look after it no more: his people that he hath taken ſuch delight in, and care of, are now thrown out of his protection. They had been *the dearly beloved of his ſoul*, precious in his ſight, and honourable above any people, which is mentioned to aggravate their ſin, in returning him hatred for his love; and their miſery, in throwing themſelves out of the favour of one that had ſuch a kindneſs for them, and to juſtify God in his dealings with them, he ſought not occaſion againſt them, but if they would have carried themſelves any thing tolerably, he would have made the beſt of them, for they were the *beloved of his ſoul*, but they had carried themſelves ſo that they had provoked him to *give them into the hand of their enemies*, to leave them unguarded, an eaſy prey to thoſe that bore them ill will. But what was the quarrel God had with a people that had been ſo long dear to him? why, truly they were degenerated. (1.) They were become like *beaſts of prey*, which no body loves, but every body avoids and gets as far off from as they can, *ver.* 8. *Mine heritage is unto me as a lion in the foreſt.* Their ſins cry to heaven for vengeance as loud as a lion roars. Nay, they *cry out againſt God* in the threatnings and ſlaughter which they breathe againſt his prophets, that ſpeak to them in his name; and what is ſaid and done againſt them, God takes as ſaid and done againſt himſelf. They blaſpheme his name, oppoſe his authority, and bid defiance to his juſtice, and ſo *cry out againſt him as a lion in the foreſt.* They that were the *ſheep of God's paſture*, are become barbarous and ravenous, and as ungovernable as lions in the foreſt, *therefore I hated them:* for what delight could the God of love take in a people that now become as *roaring lions*, and *raging beaſts*, fit to be taken and ſhot at, as a vexation and torment to all about them? (2.) They were become like *birds of prey*, and therefore alſo unworthy a place in God's houſe, where neither beaſts nor birds of prey were admitted to be offered in ſacrifice, *ver.* 9. *Mine heritage is unto me as a bird with talons*, ſo ſome read it, and ſo the margin, they are continually pulling and pecking at one another, they have by their unnatural contentions made their country a cock-pit. Or, as a *ſpeckled bird*, dyed, or ſprinkled, or bedewed, with the blood of her prey; the ſhedding of innocent blood was Jeruſalem's meaſure-filling ſin, and haſtened their ruin, not only as it provoked God againſt them, but as it provoked their neighbours likewiſe; for thoſe that have *their hand againſt every man*, ſhall have *every man's hand againſt them*, Gen. xvi. 12. and ſo it follows here, the *birds round about are againſt her.* Some make her a *ſpeckled*, pied, or *motley bird*, upon the account of their mixing the ſuperſtitious cuſtoms and uſages of the heathen with divine inſtitutions in the worſhip of God; they were fond of a *party-coloured* religion, and thought it made them fine when really it made them odious. God's turtle dove is no *ſpeckled bird.*

2. The enemies are here brought in *falling upon* them, and *laying them deſolate.* And ſome think it is upon this account that they are compared to a *ſpeckled bird*, becauſe the fowl uſe to make a noiſe about a bird of an odd unuſual colour: God's people are among the children of this world as *men wondered at*, as a *ſpeckled bird:* but this people had by their own folly made themſelves ſo; and the *beaſts and birds* are called and commiſſioned to prey upon them. Let *all the birds* round be *againſt her*, for God has forſaken her, and with them let *all the beaſts of the field come to devour.* Thoſe that have made a prey of others, ſhall themſelves be preyed upon. It did not *leſſen* the ſin of the nations, but very much *greatned* the miſery of Judah and Jeruſalem; that the deſolation brought upon them was by order from heaven. The *birds* and *beaſts* are perhaps called to feaſt upon the bodies of the ſlain, as in St John's viſion, *Rev.* xix. 17.

The utter deſolation of the land by the Chaldean army, is here ſpoken of as a thing done, ſo ſure, ſo near was it. God ſpeaks of it as a thing which he had appointed to be done, and yet which he had no pleaſure in, no more than in the death of other ſinners.

1. See with what a tender affection he ſpeaks of this land, notwithſtanding the ſinfulneſs of it, in remembrance of his covenant, and the tribute of honour and glory he had formerly had from it. It is *my vineyard*, *my portion*, *my pleaſant portion*, ver. 10. Note, God has a kindneſs and concern for his church, tho' there be much amiſs in it: and his correcting of it will very much conſiſt with his complacency in it.

2. See with what a tender compaſſion he ſpeaks of the deſolations of this land. *Many paſtors*, the Chaldean generals that made themſelves maſters of the country, and eat it up with their armies, as eaſily as the Arabian ſhepherds with their flocks eat up the fruits of a piece of ground that lies common, *they have deſtroyed my vineyard*, without any conſideration had either of the value of it, or my intereſt in it: they have with the greateſt inſolence and indignation *trodden it under foot*; and that which was a pleaſant land, they have made a *deſolate wilderneſs.* The deſtruction was univerſal, *the whole land is made deſolate*, ver. 11. it is made ſo by the ſword of war; *the ſpoilers*, the Chaldean ſoldiers are come *through the plain*, *upon all high places*; they have made themſelves maſters of all the natural faſtneſſes, and artificial fortreſſes, *ver.* 12. *The ſword devours from one end of the land to the other*, all places lie expoſed, and the numerous army of the invaders diſperſe themſelves into every corner of that fruitful country, ſo that *no fleſh ſhall have peace*, none ſhall be exempt from the calamity, nor be able to enjoy any tranquillity. When *all fleſh have corrupted their way*, no *fleſh* ſhall have peace; thoſe only have peace that *walk after the Spirit.*

3. See whence all this miſery comes. (1.) It comes from the diſpleaſure of God. It is *the ſword of the Lord* that *devours*, ver. 12. while God's people keep cloſe to him, the ſword of their protectors and deliverers is the ſword of the Lord, witneſs that of Gideon: but when they have forſaken him, ſo that he is become their enemy, and fights againſt them; then the ſword of their invaders and deſtroyers is become the *ſword of the Lord*, witneſs this of the Chaldeans. It is *becauſe of the fierce anger of the Lord*, ver. 13. that was it which kindled this fire among them, and made their enemies ſo furious. And *who may ſtand before him when he is angry?* (2.) It is their ſin that has made God their enemy, particularly their incorrigibleneſs under former rebukes, *ver.* 11. *The land mourns unto me*, the country that lies deſolate, doth as it were pour out its complaint before God, and humble it ſelf under his hand, but the inhabitants are ſo ſenſeleſs and ſtupid, that *none of them lays it to heart:* they do not *mourn to God*, but are unaffected with his diſpleaſure, while the very ground they go upon ſhames them. Note, When God's hand is *lifted up*, and men *will not ſee*, it ſhall be *laid on*, and they ſhall be *made to feel*, Iſa. xxvi. 11.

4. See how unable they ſhould be to fence againſt it, *ver.* 13. *They have ſown wheat*, they have taken a deal of pains for their own ſecurity, and promiſed themſelves great matters from their endeavours, but it is all in vain, *they ſhall reap thorns*, i. e. that which ſhall prove very grievous and vexatious to them; inſtead of helping themſelves, they ſhall but make themſelves more uneaſy: they have *put themſelves to pain*, both with their labour, and with their expectation, but *it ſhall not profit*; they *ſhall not prevail* to extricate themſelves out of the difficulties into which they have plunged themſelves. *They ſhall be aſhamed of your revenues*, that they have depended ſo much upon their preparations of war, and particularly upon their ability to bear the charges of it. Money is the ſinews of war; they thought they had enough of that, but ſhall be aſhamed of it; for *their ſilver and gold ſhall not profit them* in the day of the Lord's anger.

14. ¶ Thus ſaith the LORD againſt all mine evil neighbours, that touch the inheritance which I have cauſed my people Iſrael to inherit, Behold, I will pluck them out of their land, and pluck out the houſe of Judah from among them. 15. And it ſhall come to paſs after that I have plucked them out, I will return, and have compaſſion on them, and will bring them again every man to his heritage, and every man to his land. 16. And it ſhall come to paſs, if they will diligently learn the ways of my people, to ſwear by my name, The LORD liveth (as they taught my people to ſwear by Baal) then ſhall they be built in the midſt of my people. 17. But if they will not obey, I will utterly pluck up, and deſtroy that nation, ſaith the LORD.

The prophets ſometimes in God's name delivered meſſages both of judgment and mercy to the nations that bordered on the land of Iſrael: but here is a meſſage to them all in general, who had in their turns been one way or other injurious to God's people, had either oppreſſed them, or triumphed in their being oppreſſed. Obſerve,

1. What the quarrel was that God had with them. They were *his evil neighbours*, ver. 14. *i. e.* evil neighbours to his church, and what they did againſt it, he took as done againſt himſelf, and therefore called them *his evil neighbours*, that ſhould have been *neighbourly* to Iſrael, but were quite otherwiſe. Note, It is often the lot of good people to live among bad neighbours, that are unkind and provoking to them; and it is bad indeed when they are *all ſo.* Theſe *evil neighbours* were the Moabites, Ammonites, Syrians, Edomites, Egyptians, that had been ill neighbours to Iſrael in helping to debauch them, and draw them from God; therefore God calls them his ill neighbours, and now they helped to make them deſolate, and joined with the Chaldeans againſt them. It is juſt with God to make thoſe the inſtruments of trouble to us, whom we have made inſtruments of ſin. That which God lays to their charge is, they have *meddled with the inheritance*, *which I have cauſed my people Iſrael to inherit*, they unjuſtly ſeized that which was none of their own; nay, they ſacrilegiouſly turned that to their own uſe, which was given to God's peculiar people. He that ſaid, *Touch not my anointed*; ſaid alſo, *Touch not their inheritance*; it is at your peril if you do. Not only the perſons, but the eſtates of God's people are taken under his protection.

2. What

2. What course he would take with them. (1.) He would break the power they had got over his people, and force them to make restitution. I will *pluck out the house of Judah from among them*, which would be a great favour to God's people, who had either been taken captive by them, or when they fled to them for shelter, had been detained and made prisoners: but a great mortification to their enemies, who would be like a lion disappointed of his prey. The house of Judah either cannot, or will not, make any bold struggles towards their own liberty, but God will with a gracious violence pluck them out, will by his Spirit compel them to come out, and by his power compel their task-masters to let them go, as he plucked Israel out of Egypt. (2.) He would bring upon them the same calamities that they had been instrumental to bring upon his people, *I will pluck them out of their land.* Judgment began at the house of God, but it did not end there. Nebuchadnezzar, when he had wasted the land of Israel, turned his hand against their evil neighbours, and was a scourge to them.

3. What mercy God had in store for such of them as would join themselves to him, and become his people, *ver.* 15, 16. They had drawn in God's backsliding people to join with them in the service of idols. If now they would be drawn by a returning people, to join with them in the service of the true and living God, they should not only have their enmity to the people of God forgiven them, but the distance which they had been kept at before should be removed, and they should be received to stand upon the same level with the Israel of God; which had its accomplishment in part, when after the return out of captivity, many of the people of the lands that had been ill neighbours to Israel, became Jews; and was to have its accomplishment in the conversion of the Gentiles to the faith of Christ. Let not Israel, tho' injured by them, be implacable towards them, for God is not. *After that I have plucked them out,* in justice for their sins, and in jealousy for the honour of Israel, *I will return*, will change my way, *and have compassion on them.* Tho' being heathen they can lay no claim to the mercies of the covenant, yet they shall have benefit by the compassions of the Creator, who will look upon them as the work of his hands however. Note, God's controversies with his creatures, tho' they cannot be disputed, yet may be accommodated. Those who (as these here) have been not only strangers, but *enemies in their minds by wicked works*, may be *reconciled*, Col. i. 21. Observe here,

(1.) What were the terms on which God would shew favour to them: It is always provided, *that they will diligently learn the ways of my people.* That is in general; the ways that they walk in when they carry it as *my people*, not the crooked ways into which they have turned aside; the ways which my people are directed to take. Note, (1.) There are good ways that are peculiarly *the ways of God's people*, which however they may differ in the choice of their paths, they are all agreed to walk in. The ways of holiness and heavenly-mindedness, of love and peaceableness; the ways of prayer and sabbath-sanctification, and diligent attendance on instituted ordinances, these and the like are *the ways of God's people.* (2.) Those that would have their lot with God's people, and their last end like theirs, must *learn their ways*, and walk in them; must observe the rule they walk by, and conform to that rule, and the steps they take by that rule, and go forth by those footsteps. By an intimate conversation with God's people, they must learn to do as they do. (3.) It is impossible to learn the ways of God's people as they should be learned, without a great deal of care and pains: we must diligently observe these ways, and diligently oblige ourselves to walk in them; *look diligently*, Heb. xii. 15. and *work diligently*, Luke xiii. 25. In particular, they must learn to give honour to God's name, by making all their solemn appeals to him. They must learn to say, *The Lord liveth*, to own him, and to adore him, and to abide by his judgment; *as they taught my people to swear by Baal.* It was bad enough that they did themselves *swear by Baal*, worse that they taught others, and worst of all that they taught God's own people, who had been better taught: and yet if they will at length reform, they shall be accepted. Observe, (1.) We must not despair of the conversion of the worst; no not of those who have been instrumental to pervert and debauch others; even they may be brought to repentance, and if they be, shall find mercy. (2.) Those whom we have been industrious to draw to that which is evil, when God opens their eyes and ours, we should be as industrious to follow in that which is good. It will be a holy revenge upon ourselves to become pupils to those in the way of duty, to whom we have been tutors in the way of sin. (3.) The conversion of the deceived may prove a happy occasion of the conversion even of the deceivers. Thus they who fell together into the ditch, are sometimes plucked together out of it.

(2.) What should be the tokens and fruits of this favour, when they return to God, and God to them. (1.) They shall be restored to, and re-established in their own land, *ver.* 15. *I bring them again every man to his heritage.* The same hand that plucked them up, shall plant them again. (2.) They shall become entitled to the spiritual privileges of God's Israel. If they will be towardly, and *learn the ways of my people*, will conform themselves to the rules, and confine themselves to the restraints of God's family, *then shall they be built in the midst of my people.* They shall not only be brought among them, to have a name and a place in the house of the Lord, where there was a court for the Gentiles, but they shall be built among them, they shall unite with them, the former enmities shall be slain. They shall be both edified and settled among them. See *Isa.* lvi. 5, 6, 7. Note, They that diligently learn the ways of God's people, shall enjoy the privileges and comforts of his people.

4. What should become of those that were still wedded to their own evil ways, yea tho' many of those about them turned to the Lord, *ver.* 17. *If they will not obey*, if any of them continue to stand it out, *I will utterly pluck up and destroy that nation*, that family, that particular person, *saith the Lord.* Those that will not be ruled by the grace of God, shall be ruined by the justice of God. And if disobedient nations shall be destroyed, much more disobedient churches, from whom better things are expected.

CHAP. XIII.

Still the prophet is attempting to awaken this secure and stubborn people to repentance, by the consideration of the judgments of God that were coming upon them. He is to tell them, (1.) By the sign of a girdle spoiled, that their pride should be stained, ver. 1—11. *(2.) By the sign of bottles filled with wine, that their counsels should be blasted*, ver. 12—14. *(3.) In consideration hereof he is to call them to repent, and humble themselves*, ver. 15—21. *(4.) He is to convince them that it is for their obstinacy and incorrigibleness that the judgments of God are so prolonged, and brought to extremity*, ver. 22—27.

1. THUS saith the LORD unto me, Go, and get thee a linen girdle, and put it upon thy loyns, and put it not in water. 2. So I got a girdle, according to the word of the LORD, and put *it* on my loyns. 3. And the word of the LORD came unto me the second time, saying, 4. Take the girdle that thou hast got, which *is* upon thy loyns, and arise, go to Euphrates, and hide it there in a hole of the rock. 5. So I went and hid it by Euphrates, as the LORD commanded me. 6. And it came to pass after many days, that the LORD said unto me, Arise, go to Euphrates, and take the girdle from thence, which I commanded thee to hide there. 7. Then I went to Euphrates, and digged, and took the girdle from the place where I had hid it; and behold, the girdle was marred, it was profitable for nothing. 8. Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 9. Thus saith the LORD, After this manner will I mar the pride of Judah, and the great pride of Jerusalem. 10. This evil people which refuse to hear my words, which walk in the imagination of their heart, and walk after other gods to serve them, and to worship them, shall even be as this girdle, which is good for nothing. 11. For as the girdle cleaveth to the loyns of a man; so have I caused to cleave unto me the whole house of Israel, and the whole house of Judah, saith the LORD; that they might be unto me for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory: but they would not hear.

Here is 1. A sign, the marring of a girdle, which the prophet had worn for some time, by hiding it in a hole of a rock, near the river Euphrates. It was usual with the prophets to teach by signs, that a stupid unthinking people might be brought to consider and believe, and be affected with what was thus set before them. (1.) He was to wear a linen girdle for some time, *ver.* 1, 2. Some think he wore it under his clothes, because it was linen, and is said to *cleave to his loins*, ver. 11. It should rather seem to be worn upon his clothes, for it was worn for a name and a praise, and probably was a fine sash, such as officers wear, and such as are commonly worn at this day in the eastern nations. He must not *put it in water*, but wear it as it was, that it might be the stronger, and less likely to rot: linen wastes almost as much with washing as with wearing. Being not wet, it was the more stiff, and less apt to ply, yet he must make a shift to wear it. Probably it was very fine

linen, which will wear long without washing. The prophet, like John Baptist, was none of those that wore soft clothing, and therefore it would be the more strange to see him with a linen girdle on, who probably used to wear a leathern one. (2.) After he had worn this linen girdle for some time, he must go and *hide it in a hole of a rock*, (ver. 4.) by the water's side, where, when the water was high, it would be wet, and when it fell, would grow dry again, and by that means would soon rot, sooner than if it were always wet, or always dry. (3.) After many days, he must go look for it, and he should find it quite spoiled, gone all to rags, and good for nothing, *ver.* 7. It has been of old a question among interpreters, whether this was really done, so as to be seen and observed by the people; or only in a dream or vision, so as to go no farther than the prophet's own mind. It seems hard to imagine that the prophet should be sent on two such long journies as to the river Euphrates, each of which would take him up some weeks time, when he could so ill be spared at home: and for that reason most incline to think the journey at least was only in vision, like that of Ezekiel, from the captivity in Chaldea to Jerusalem, *Ezek.* viii. 3. and from thence back to Chaldea, *chap.* xi. 24. And the explanation of this sign is only given to the prophet himself, *ver.* 8. not to the people, the sign not being publick. But there being, it is probable, at that time great conveniences of travelling between Jerusalem and Babylon, and some part of Euphrates being not so far off, but that it was made the utmost border of the land of promise, *Josh.* i. 4. I see no inconvenience in supposing the prophet to have made two journies thither; for it is expressly said, *he did as the Lord commanded him.* And thus gave a signal proof of his obsequiousness to his God, to shame the stubbornness of a disobedient people: and the toil of his journey would be very proper to signify both the pains they took to corrupt themselves with their idolatries, and the sad fatigue of their captivity: and Euphrates being the river of Babylon which was to be the place of their bondage, was a material circumstance in this sign.

2. The thing signified by this sign. The prophet was willing to be at any cost and pains to affect this people with the word of the Lord: ministers must spend and be spent for the good of souls. We have the reddition of this sign, *ver.* 9, 10, 11.

1. The people of Israel had been to God as this girdle, in two respects. (1.) He had taken them into covenant and communion with himself. *As the girdle cleaveth* very close *to the loins of a man*, and surrounds him, *so have I caused to cleave to me the houses of Israel and Judah.* They were a people near to God, *Psal.* cxlviii. *ult.* they were his own, a peculiar people to him; a kingdom of priests that had access to him above other nations. He *caused them to cleave* to him by the law he gave them, the prophets he sent among them, and the favours which in his providence he shewed them. He required their stated attendance in the courts of his house, and the frequent ratification of their covenant with him by sacrifices: thus they were made so to cleave to him, that one would think they could never have been parted. (2.) He had herein designed his own honour, when he took them to be *to him for a people*, it was that they might be to him *for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory*; as a girdle is an ornament to a man, and particularly the *curious girdle of the ephod* was to the high-priest *for glory and for beauty.* Note, Those whom God takes to be to him *for a people*, he intends to be to him *for a praise.* (1.) It is their duty to honour him, by observing his institutions, and aiming therein at his glory, and thus adorning their profession. (2.) It is their happiness that he reckons himself honoured in them, and by them. He is pleased with them, and glories in his relation to them, while they behave themselves as becomes his people. He was pleased to take it among the titles of his honour to be *the God of Israel*, even a *God to Israel*, 1 Chron. xvii. 24. In vain do we pretend to be to God *for a people*, if we be not to him *for a praise.*

2. They had by their idolatries and other iniquities loosed themselves from him, thrown themselves at a distance, robbed him of the honour they owed him, buried themselves in the earth, and foreign earth too, mingling themselves among the nations, and were so spoiled and corrupted that they were *good for nothing*: they could no more be to God, as they were designed *for a name and a praise*, for *they would not hear*, neither their duty to do it, nor their privilege to value it, *they refused to hear the words of God*, by which they might have been kept still cleaving close to him; they *walked in the imagination of their heart*, wherever their fancy led them; and denied themselves no gratification they had a mind to, particularly in their worship; they would not *cleave to God*, but *walked after other gods to serve them*, and *to worship them*; they doted upon the gods of the heathen nations that lay towards Euphrates, so that they were quite spoiled for the service of their own God, and were *as this girdle*, this rotten girdle, a disgrace to their profession, and not an ornament. And a thousand pities it was that such a girdle should be so spoiled, that such a people should so wretchedly degenerate.

3. God would by his judgments separate them from him, send them into captivity, deface all their beauty, and ruin their excellency, so that they should be like a fine girdle gone to rags, a worthless, useless, despicable people. God will after this manner *mar the pride of Judah, and the great pride of Jerusalem.* He would strip them of all that which was the matter of their pride, of which they boasted, and in which they trusted; it should not only be sullied and stained, but quite destroyed like this linen girdle. Observe, He speaks of *the pride of Judah*; the country people were proud of their holy land, their good land, but it is the *great pride of Jerusalem*, there the temple was, and the royal palace, and therefore those citizens were more proud than the inhabitants of other cities. God takes notice of the degrees of mens pride; the pride of some, and the great pride of others, and he will mar it, he will stain it. Pride will have a fall, for God resists the proud. He will either *mar the pride* that is in us, that is, *mortify* it by his grace, make us ashamed of it; and, like Hezekiah, humble us for the pride of our hearts, the great pride, and cure us of it, as great as it is. And this marring of the pride will be the making of the soul; happy it is for us, if by humbling providences our hearts be humbled; or else, he will mar the thing we are proud of. Parts, gifts, learning, power, external privileges, if we are proud of these, it is just with God to blast them; even the temple, when it became Jerusalem's pride, was marred, and laid in ashes. It is the honour of God to *look upon every one that is proud, and abase him.*

12. ¶ Therefore thou shalt speak unto them this word, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Every bottle shall be filled with wine: and they shall say unto thee, Do we not certainly know, that every bottle shall be filled with wine? 13. Then shalt thou say unto them, Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will fill all the inhabitants of this land, even the kings that sit upon Davids throne, and the priests, and the prophets, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem with drunkenness. 14. And I will dash them one against another, even the fathers and the sons together, saith the LORD: I will not pity, nor spare, nor have mercy, but destroy them. 15. ¶ Hear ye, and give ear, be not proud: for the LORD hath spoken. 16. Give glory to the LORD your God before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, *and* make *it* gross darkness. 17. But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for *your* pride, and mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the LORDs flock is carried away captive. 18. Say unto the king and to the queen, Humble your selves, sit down; for your principalities shall come down, *even* the crown of your glory. 19. The cities of the south shall be shut up, and none shall open *them*; Judah shall be carried away captive all of it, it shall be wholly carried away captive. 20. Lift up your eyes, and behold them that come from the north: where *is* the flock *that* was given thee, thy beautiful flock? 21. What wilt thou say when he shall punish thee? (for thou hast taught them *to be* captains, *and* as chief over thee) shall not sorrows take thee as a woman in travail?

Here is, 1. A judgment threatned against this people, that would quite intoxicate them. This doom is pronounced against them in a figure, to make it the more taken notice of, and the more affecting, *ver.* 12. *Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, every bottle shall be filled with wine*, i. e. Those that by their sins have made themselves *vessels of wrath fitted to destruction*, shall be filled with the wrath of God, as a bottle is with wine; and as every vessel of mercy, prepared for glory shall be filled with mercy and glory, so they shall be *full of the fury of the Lord*, Isa. li. 20. and they shall be brittle as bottles; and as *old bottles* into which *new wine* is put, they shall burst and be broken to pieces, *Mat.* ix. 17. Or, they shall have their heads as full of wine as bottles are, for so it is explained, *ver.* 13. *They shall be filled with drunkenness*; compare *Isa.* li. 17. It is likely this was a common proverb among them, applied divers ways; but they not being aware of the prophet's meaning in it, ridiculed him for it, *Do we not certainly know*, that *every bottle shall be filled with wine?* What strange thing is there in that? Tell us something that we did not know before. Perhaps they were thus tetchy with the prophet, because they apprehended this to be a reflexion upon them for their drunkenness, and probably it was in part so intended: They *love flagons of wine*, Hos. iii. 1.

They

They made their king *ſick with bottles of wine*, Hoſ. vii. 5. Their watchmen were all *for wine*, Iſa. lvi. 12. They love their falſe prophets *that propheſied to them of wine*, Mic. ii. 11. That bid them be merry, for they ſhould never want their bottle to make them ſo. Well, ſaith the prophet, you ſhall have your *bottles full of wine*, but not ſuch wine as you deſire. They ſuſpected he had ſome myſtical meaning in it, which propheſied no good concerning them, but evil, and he owns that ſo he had. What he meant was this,

(1.) That they ſhould be as *giddy* as men in drink. And a drunken man is fitly compared to a bottle or cask full of wine, for when the wine is in, the wit, and wiſdom, and virtue, and all that is good for any thing, is out. Now God threatens, *ver.* 13. that they ſhall all be *filled with drunkenneſs*; they ſhall be full of confuſion in their counſels, ſhall *faulter* in all their talk, and *ſtagger* in all their motions; they ſhall not know what they ſay or do; much leſs what they *ſhould* ſay or do. They ſhall be ſick of all their enjoyments, and throw them up, as drunken men do, *Job* xx. 15. They ſhall fall into a ſlumber, and be utterly unable to help themſelves, and, like men that have drunk away their reaſon, ſhall lie at the mercy, and expoſe themſelves to the contempt of all about them. And this ſhall be the condition not of ſome among them. If any had been ſober, they might have helped the reſt; but even *the kings that ſit upon the throne of David*, that ſhould have been like their father David, who was *wiſe as an angel of God*, ſhall be thus intoxicated. Their *prieſts* and *prophets* too, their falſe *prophets*, that pretended to guide them, were as indulgent of their luſts, and therefore were juſtly as much deprived of their ſenſes, as any other. Nay, and all *the inhabitants* both *of the land*, and *of Jeruſalem*, were as far gone as they. Whom God will deſtroy he infatuates.

(2.) That being giddy they ſhould *run a-head* upon one another. The cup of the wine of the Lord's fury ſhall throw them not only into a lethargy, ſo that they ſhall not be able to help themſelves, or one another, but into a perfect phrenzy, ſo that they ſhall do miſchief to themſelves and one another. *Ver.* 14. *I will daſh a man againſt his brother.* Not only their *drunken follies*, but their *drunken frays* ſhall help to ruin them. Drunken men are often quarrelſome, and upon that account they have *wo and ſorrow*, Prov. xxiii. 29, 30. So their ſin is their puniſhment; it was ſo here. God ſent an *evil ſpirit* into families and neighbourhoods, as *Judg.* ix. 23. which made them *jealous* of, and *ſpiteful* towards, one another: So that *the fathers and ſons* went together by the ears, and were ready to pull one another to pieces, which made them all an eaſy prey to the common enemy. This decree againſt them being gone forth, God ſaith, *I will not pity nor ſpare, nor have mercy, but deſtroy them*, for they *will not pity, nor ſpare, nor have mercy*, but *deſtroy* one another, ſee *Hab.* ii. 15, 16.

2. Here is good counſel given, which if it were taken, this deſolation would be prevented. It is in ſhort, to *humble themſelves under the mighty hand of God.* If they will *hearken* and *give ear*, this is that which God has to ſay to them, *Be not proud*, ver. 15. This was one of the ſins for which God had a controverſy with them, *ver.* 9. let them mortify and forſake their ſin, and God will let fall his controverſy. *Be not proud*, i. e. when God ſpeaks to you by his prophets, do not think yourſelves too good to be taught, be not ſcornful, be not wilful: Let not your hearts riſe againſt the word, nor ſlight the meſſengers that bring it you. When God is coming forth againſt you in his providence, and by them he ſpeaks: Be not ſecure when he threatens, be not impatient when he ſtrikes, for pride is at the bottom of both. It is the great God that has *ſpoken*, whoſe authority is inconteſtable, whoſe power is irreſiſtible, therefore bow to what he ſaith, and *be not proud*, as you have been.

They muſt not be proud, for,

(1.) They muſt *advance* God, and ſtudy how to do him honour: *Give glory to the Lord your God*, and not to your idols, not to other gods. Give him glory, by confeſſing your ſins, owning yourſelves guilty before him, and accepting the puniſhment of your iniquity, *ver.* 16. Give him glory, by a ſincere repentance and reformation. Then, and not till then, we begin to live as we ſhould, and to ſome good purpoſe, when we begin to *give glory to the Lord our God*; to make his honour our chief end, and to ſeek it accordingly. Do this quickly, while your ſpace to repent is continued to you; *before he cauſe darkneſs*, before he bring his judgments upon you, which you will ſee no way of eſcaping. Note, Darkneſs will be the portion of thoſe that will not repent, to *give glory to God.* When thoſe that by the fourth vial were ſcorched with heat, *repented not to give glory to God*, the next vial filled them with *darkneſs*, Rev. xvi. 9, 10. The aggravation of the darkneſs here threatened, is, (1.) That their attempts to eſcape ſhall haſten their ruin; *their feet ſhall ſtumble*, when they are making all the haſte they can over *the dark mountains*, and they ſhall fall, and be unable to get up again. Note, Thoſe that think to out-run the judgments of God, will find their road *impaſſable*; let them *make the beſt* of their way, they can *make nothing* of it; the judgments that purſue them, will overtake them; their way is *dark* and *ſlippery*, Pſal. xxxv. 6. And therefore before it comes to that extremity, it is our wiſdom to *give glory* to him, and ſo make our peace with him; to fly to his mercy, and then there will be no occaſion to fly from his juſtice. (2.) That their hopes of a better ſtate of things will be diſappointed; *while ye look for light*, for comfort and relief, he will *turn it into the ſhadow of death*, which is very diſmal and terrible, and make it *groſs darkneſs*, like that of Egypt, when Pharaoh continued to harden his heart, which was darkneſs that might be felt. The expectation of impenitent ſinners periſheth, *when they die*, and think to have it ſatisfied.

(2.) They muſt *abaſe* themſelves, and take ſhame to themſelves; the prerogative of the king and queen will not exempt them from this, *ver.* 18. *Say to the king and queen*, that as great as they are, they muſt *humble themſelves* by true repentance, and ſo give both glory to God, and a good example to their ſubjects. Note, Thoſe that are exalted above others in the world, muſt humble themſelves before God, who is higher than the higheſt, and to whom kings and queens are accountable. They muſt *humble themſelves*, and *ſit down*; ſit down, and conſider what is coming; ſit down in the duſt, and lament themſelves. Let them *humble themſelves*, for God will otherwiſe take an effectual courſe to humble them. *Your principalities ſhall come down*, the honour and power by which you value yourſelves, and in which you confide, *even the crown of your glory*, your *goodly or glorious crown*; when you are led away captives, where will your principality and all the badges of it be then? Bleſſed be God, there is a crown of glory, which thoſe ſhall inherit, who do humble themſelves, that ſhall never *come down.*

3. This counſel is enforced by ſome arguments, if they continue proud and unhumbled.

1. It will be the prophet's *unſpeakable grief*, ver. 17. *If you will not hear it*, will not ſubmit to the word, but continue refractory, not only mine eye, but *my ſoul ſhall weep in ſecret places.* Note, The obſtinacy of people in refuſing to hear the word of God, will be a heart-breaking to their poor miniſters, who know ſomething of the terrors of the Lord, and the worth of ſouls, and are ſo far from deſiring, that they tremble at the thoughts of the death of ſinners. His grief, for it was undiſſembled, his *ſoul wept*; and void of affectation, for he choſe to weep *in ſecret places*, where no eye ſaw him, but his who is all eye. He would not only mingle his tears with his publick preaching, but with his private devotions: Nay, thoughts of their caſe would make him melancholy, and he would become a perfect recluſe. It would grieve him, (1.) To ſee their ſins unrepented of, *my ſoul ſhall weep for your pride*, your haughtineſs, and ſtubborneſs, and vain confidence. Note, The ſins of others ſhould be matter of ſorrow to us: We muſt mourn for that which we cannot mend; and mourn the more for it, becauſe we cannot mend it. (2.) To ſee their calamity paſt redreſs and remedy; *mine eyes ſhall weep ſore*, not ſo much becauſe my relations, friends, and neighbours, are in diſtreſs, but *becauſe the Lord's flock*, his people, and the ſheep of his paſture, *are carried away captive.* That ſhould always grieve us moſt, by which God's honour ſuffers, and the intereſt of his kingdom is weakened.

2. It will be their own *inevitable ruin*, ver. 19, 20, 21.

1. The land ſhall be laid waſte; *the cities of the ſouth ſhall be ſhut up:* The cities of Judah lay in the ſouthern part of the land of Canaan, theſe ſhall be ſtraitly beſieged by the enemy, ſo that there ſhall be no going in and out. Or, deſerted by the inhabitants, that there ſhall be none to go in and out. Some underſtand it of the cities of Egypt, which was ſouth from Judah; the places there, whence they expected ſuccours, ſhall fail them, and they ſhall find no acceſs to them.

2. The inhabitants ſhall be hurried away into a foreign country, there to live in ſlavery: *Judah ſhall be carried away captive.* Some were already carried off, which they hoped might ſerve to anſwer the prediction, and that the reſidue ſhould ſtill be left; no, *it ſhall be carried away all of it*, God will make a full end with them, *it ſhall be wholly carried away:* So it was in the laſt captivity under Zedekiah, becauſe they repented not.

3. The enemy was now at hand that ſhould do this, *ver.* 20. *lift up your eyes*: I ſee them upon their march, and you may if you will *behold them that come from the north*, from the land of the Chaldeans; ſee how faſt they advance, how fierce they appear. Upon this he adreſſeth himſelf to the king, or rather (becauſe the pronouns are feminine) to the city or ſtate. (1.) What will you do now with the people which is committed to your charge, and which you ought to protect? *where is the flock that was given thee, thy beautiful flock?* Whither canſt thou take them now for ſhelter? How can they eſcape theſe ravening wolves? Magiſtrates muſt look upon themſelves as ſhepherds, and thoſe that are under their charge as *their flock*, which they are entruſted with the care of, and muſt give an account of; they muſt take delight in them as their *beautiful flock*, and conſider what to do for their ſafety in times of publick danger. Maſters of families that neglect their children, and ſuffer them to periſh for want of a good education, and miniſters that neglect their people, ſhould think they hear God putting this queſtion to them, *where is the flock that was given thee* to feed, *that beauteous flock?* It is ſtarved, it is left expoſed to the beaſts of prey. What account wilt thou give of them when the chief ſhepherd ſhall appear? (2.) What have you to object againſt the equity of God's proceedings? *What wilt thou ſay when he ſhall viſit upon thee* the former days? Thou canſt ſay nothing, but that *God is juſt in all that is brought upon thee.* They that flatter themſelves with hopes of impunity, what will they ſay? What a confuſion will cover their faces, when they ſhall find themſelves deceived, and that God doth *puniſh* them? (3.) What thoughts will they now have

have of their own folly, in giving the Chaldeans such power over them, by seeking to them for assistance, and joining in league with them. Thus *thou hast taught them against thyself to be captains*, and to *become the head*. Hezekiah began, when he shewed his treasures to the ambassadors of the king of Babylon, tempting him thereby to come and plunder him. Those that having a God to trust to, court foreign alliances, and confide in them, do but make rods for themselves, and *teach* their neighbours how to become their masters. (4.) How will they bear the trouble that is at the door? *Shall not sorrows take thee as a woman in travail?* Sorrows which thou canst not escape or put off, extremity of sorrows; and in these respects more grievous than those of a woman in travail, that they were not *expected before*, and that there is no *man-child* to be *born*, the *joy* of which shall make them *afterwards* to be *forgotten*.

22. ¶ And if thou say in thine heart, Wherefore come these things upon me? for the greatness of thine iniquity are thy skirts discovered, *and* thy heels made bare. 23. Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? *then* may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil. 24. Therefore will I scatter them as stubble that passeth away by the wind of the wilderness. 25. This *is* thy lot, the portion of thy measures from me, saith the LORD; because thou hast forgotten me, and trusted in falshood. 26. Therefore will I discover thy skirts upon thy face, that thy shame may appear. 27. I have seen thine adulteries, and thy neighings, the lewdness of thy whoredom, *and* thine abominations on the hills in the fields: wo unto thee, O Jerusalem, wilt thou not be made clean? when *shall it* once *be?*

Here is, 1. Ruin threatened, as before, that the Jews shall go into captivity, and fall under all the miseries of beggary and bondage; shall be stripped of their clothes, *their skirts discovered*, for want of upper garments to cover them, and their *heels made bare*, for want of shoes, *ver.* 22. Thus they used to deal with prisoners taken in war, when they drove them into captivity, *naked and bare-foot*, Isa. xx. 4. Being thus carried off into a strange country, they shall be *scattered* there, as the stubble that is blown away *by the wind of the wilderness*, and no body is concerned to bring it together again, *ver.* 24. If the stubble escape *the fire*, it shall be carried away by *the wind*. If one judgment do not the work, another shall, with those that by sin have made themselves as *stubble*. They shall be stripped of all their ornaments, and exposed to shame, as whores that are carted, *ver.* 26. They made their pride appear, but God will *make their shame appear*; so that those who have doted on them, shall be ashamed of them.

2. An enquiry made by the people into the cause of this ruin, *ver.* 22. Thou wilt *say in thine heart*, (and God knows how to give a proper answer to what men say in their hearts, though they do not speak it out; *Jesus knowing their thoughts*, replied to *them*, Mat. ix. 4.) *wherefore came these things upon me?* The question is supposed to come into the heart, (1.) Of a sinner *quarrelling with God*, and refusing to *receive correction*; they could not see that they had done any thing, which might justly provoke God to be thus angry with them: They durst not speak it out; but in their hearts they thus charged God with unrighteousness, as if he had *laid upon them more than was meet*. They *seek* for the cause of their calamities, when if they had not been wilfully blind they might easily have *seen* it. Or, (2.) Of a sinner *returning to God*. If there come but a *penitent* thought into the heart at any time, saying, *What have I done?* chap. viii. 6. Wherefore am I in affliction? Why doth God contend with me? God takes notice of it, and is ready by his Spirit to impress the conviction, that sin being discovered, it may be repented of.

3. An answer to this enquiry. God will be justified when he speaks, and will oblige us to justify him; and therefore will set the sin of sinners in order before them. Do they ask, *wherefore these things came upon them?* Let them know, it is all along of themselves.

1. It is for the *greatness of their iniquities*, ver. 22. God doth not take advantage against them for small faults; no, the sins for which he now punisheth them are of the first rate, very heinous in their own nature, and highly aggravated: For *the multitude of thine iniquity*, so it may be read. Sins of every kind, and often repeated, and relapsed into. And some think we are more in danger from the multitude of our lesser sins, than from the heinousness of our greater sins; of both we may say, *Who can understand his errors?*

2. It is for their *obstinacy in sin*; their being so long accustomed to it, that there is little hopes left of their being reclaimed from it, *ver.* 23. *Can the Ethiopian change his skin*, that is by nature black, or the *leopard his spots*, that are even woven into the skin? Dirt contracted may be washed off, but we cannot alter the natural colour of a *hair*, Matth. v. 36. much less of the skin; and so impossible is it, morally impossible, to reclaim and reform these people. (1.) They had been long *accustomed to do evil*; they were *taught* to do evil, they had been educated and brought up in sin, they had served an apprenticeship to it, and had all their days made a trade of it. It was so much their *constant practice*, that it was become a *second nature* to them. (2.) Their prophets therefore despaired of ever bringing them to *do good*. That was it they aimed at; they perswaded them to cease to do evil, and learn to do well, but could not prevail. They had so long been used to do evil, that it was next to impossible for them to repent, and amend, and begin to do good. Note, Custom in sin is a very great hindrance to conversion from sin. The disease that is inveterate, is generally thought incurable. Those that have been long *accustomed to sin*, have shaken off the restraints of fear and shame; their consciences are seared, the habits of sin are confirmed, it pleads prescription, and it is just with God to give those up to their own hearts lusts, that have long refused to give up themselves to his grace. Sin is the *blackness* of the soul, the deformity of it; it is its *spot*, the discolouring it; it is natural to us, we were *shapen in* it, so that we cannot get clear of it by any power of our own; but there is an almighty grace that is able to change the *Ethiopian's skin*, and that grace shall not be wanting to those, that, in a sense of their need of it, seek it earnestly, and improve it faithfully.

3. It is for their treacherous *departures* from the God of truth, and *dependences* on lying vanities, *ver.* 25. *This is thy lot*, to be scattered and driven away; this is *the portion of thy measures from me*, the punishment assigned thee as by line and measure; this shall be thy share of the miseries of this world; expect it, and think not to escape it: It is *because thou hast forgotten me*, the favours I have bestowed upon thee, and the obligations thou art under to me; thou hast no sense, no remembrance of these. Forgetfulness of God is at the bottom of all sin, as the remembrance of our Creator betimes is the happy and hopeful beginning of a holy life. And having *forgotten me*, *thou hast trusted in falshood*, in idols, in an arm of flesh, in Egypt, in Assyria, in the self-flatteries of a deceitful heart. Whatever those trust to that forsake God, they will find it a *broken reed*, a *broken cistern*.

4. It is for their idolatry, their spiritual whoredom, that sin which is of all other most provoking to the *jealous God*. Therefore they are exposed to a *shameful calamity*, ver. 26. because they have been guilty of a *shameful iniquity*, and yet are shameless in it, *ver.* 27. *I have seen thine adulteries*, thine inordinate fancy for strange gods, which thou hast been impatient for the gratification of, and hast even *neighed* after it; even the *lewdness of thy whoredoms*, thine impudence and insatiableness in them, *i. e.* thy eager worshipping of idols *on the hills in the fields*, upon the high places. This is that for which a *wo* is denounced against thee, O Jerusalem; nay, and many woes.

4. Here is an affectionate expostulation with them in the close, upon the whole matter. Tho' it was adjudged next to impossible for them to be brought to do good, *ver.* 23. yet while there is life there is hope, and therefore still he reasons with them to bring them to repentance, *ver.* 27. (1.) He reasons with them concerning the thing it self; *Wilt thou not be made clean?* Note, It is the great concern of those, who are polluted by sin, to be made clean by repentance, and faith, and an universal reformation. The reason why sinners are not made clean, is because they will not be made clean; and herein they act most unreasonably. *Wilt thou not be made clean?* Surely thou wilt at length be perswaded to *wash thee*, *and make thee clean*, and be wise for thy self. (2.) Concerning the time of it; *When shall it once be?* Note, It is an instance of the wonderful grace of God, that he desires the repentance and conversion of sinners, and thinks the time long till they are brought to it: but it is an instance of the wonderful folly of sinners, that they put that off from time to time, which is of absolute necessity; and which, if it be not done some time, they are certainly undone for ever. They do not say they will *never* be cleansed, but not yet; they will defer it to a more convenient season, but cannot tell us *when it shall once be*.

CHAP. XIV.

This chapter was penned upon occasion of a great drought, for want of rain: This judgment began in the latter end of Josiah's reign, but as it should seem continued in the beginning of Jehoiakim's: for lesser judgments are sent, to give warning of greater coming, if not prevented by repentance. This calamity was mentioned several times before, but here in this chapter more fully. Here is, (1.) *A melancholy description of it*, ver. 1—6. (2.) *A prayer to God to put an end to this calamity, and to return in mercy to their land*, ver. 7—9. (3.) *A severe threatning, that God would proceed in his controversy, because they proceeded in their iniquity*, ver. 10—12. (4.) *The prophet's excusing the people, by laying the blame on their false prophets; and the doom passed both on the deceivers and the deceived*, ver. 13—16. (5.) *Directions given to the prophet, instead of interceding for them, to lament them; but his continuing notwithstanding to intercede for them*, ver. 17—22.

1. THE word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah concerning the dearth. 2. Judah mourneth, and the gates thereof languish, they are black unto the ground,

ground, and the cry of Jeruſalem is gone up. 3. And their nobles have ſent their little ones to the waters, they came to the pits, and found no water, they returned with their veſſels empty: they were aſhamed and confounded, and covered their heads. 4. Becauſe the ground is chapt, for there was no rain in the earth, the plowmen were aſhamed, they covered their heads. 5. Yea, the hind alſo calved in the field, and forſook *it*, becauſe there was no graſs. 6. And the wild aſſes did ſtand in the high places, they ſnuffed up the wind like dragons: their eyes did fail becauſe *there was* no graſs. 7. ¶ O LORD, though our iniquities teſtify againſt us, do thou *it* for thy names ſake: for our backſlidings are many, we have ſinned againſt thee. 8. O the hope of Iſrael, the ſaviour thereof in time of trouble, why ſhouldſt thou be as a ſtranger in the land, and as a way-faring man, *that* turneth aſide to tarry for a night? 9. Why ſhouldſt thou be as a man aſtoniſhed, as a mighty man *that* cannot ſave? yet thou, O LORD, *art* in the midſt of us, and we are called by thy name, leave us not.

The firſt verſe is the title of the whole chapter: it doth indeed all *concern the dearth*, but much of it is the prophet's prayers concerning it; yet theſe are not unfitly ſaid to be, *The word of the Lord which came to him* concerning it; for every acceptable prayer is that which God *puts into our hearts*: nothing is our word that *comes to him*, but what is firſt his word that *comes from him*. In theſe verſes we have,

1. The *language of nature lamenting the calamity*. When the heavens were as braſs, and diſtilled no dews, the earth was as iron, and produced no fruits; and then what an univerſal grief and confuſion was there!

(1.) The people of the land were all in tears. *Deſtroy their vines and their fig-trees*, and you *cauſe all their mirth to ceaſe*, *Hoſ.* ii. 11, 12. All their joy fails with the *joy of harveſt*, with that of their *corn and wine*, ver. 2. *Judah mourneth*, not for the ſin, but for the trouble; for the withholding of the rain, not for the withdrawing of God's favour. *The gates thereof*, i. e. all that go in and out at their gates, *languiſh*, look pale, and grow feeble, for want of the neceſſary ſupports of life, and for fear of the further fatal conſequences of this judgment. *The gates*, through which ſupplies of corn formerly uſed to be brought into their cities, now look melancholy; when inſtead of that, the inhabitants are departing through them to ſeek for bread in other countries. Even thoſe that ſit in the gates languiſh, *they are black unto the ground*, they go in black as mourners, and ſit on the ground; as the poor beggars at the gates are *black in the face*, for want of food, *blacker than a coal*, Lam. iv. 8. Famine is repreſented by a black horſe, *Rev.* vi. 5. They fall *to the ground* through weakneſs, not being able to go along the ſtreets. *The cry of Jeruſalem is gone up*, i. e. of the inhabitants of Jeruſalem; for the city is *ſerved by the field*; or of people from all parts of the country met at Jeruſalem to pray for rain, ſo ſome. But I think it was rather the cry of their trouble, and the cry of their ſin, than the cry of their prayer.

(2.) The great men of the land felt from this judgment, *ver.* 3. *The nobles ſent their little ones to the water*, perhaps their own children, having been forced to part with their ſervants, becauſe they had not wherewithal to keep them; and being willing to train up their children, when they were little, to labour; eſpecially in a caſe of neceſſity, as this was. We find Ahab and Obadiah, the king and the lord chamberlain of his houſhold, in their own perſons, ſeeking for water in ſuch a time of diſtreſs as this was, 1 *Kings* xviii. 5, 6. Or rather, *their meaner ones*, their ſervants, and ſmall officers; theſe they ſent to ſeek for water, which there is no living without, but there was none to be found; they *returned with their veſſels empty*, the ſprings were dried up, when there was no rain to feed them; and then *they*, i. e. their maſters that ſent them, *were aſhamed and confounded* at the diſappointment. They would not be aſhamed of their ſins, nor confounded at the ſenſe of them, but were unhumbled under the reproofs of the word, thinking their wealth and dignity ſet them above repentance; but God took a courſe to make them aſhamed of that which they were ſo proud of, when they found that even on this ſide hell their nobility would not purchaſe them a *drop of water* to cool their tongue. Let our reading the account of this calamity, make us thankful for the mercy of water, that we may not by the feeling of the calamity, be taught to value it. What is moſt *needful*, is moſt *plentiful*.

(3.) The husbandmen felt moſt ſenſibly and immediately from it, *ver.* 4. *The ploughmen were aſhamed*, for the ground was ſo parched and hard, that it would not admit the plough; even then when it was ſo *chopt* and cleft, that it ſeemed as if it did not need the plough. They were aſhamed to be idle, for there was nothing to be done, and therefore nothing to be expected. The *ſluggard that will not plough by reaſon of cold*, is not aſhamed of his own *folly*; but the diligent husbandman, that cannot plow by reaſon of heat, is aſhamed of his own *affliction*. See what an immediate dependence husbandmen have upon the divine providence, which therefore they ſhould always have an eye to, for they cannot plow or ſow in hope, unleſs God *water their furrows*, Pſal. lxv. 10.

(4.) The caſe even of the wild beaſts was very piteous, *ver.* 5, 6. Man's ſin brings thoſe judgments upon the earth, which make even the inferior creatures *groan*; and the prophet takes notice of this as a plea with God for mercy; Judah and Jeruſalem have ſinned, but the hinds and the wild aſſes, what have they done? The hinds are *pleaſant* creatures, lovely and loving, and particularly tender of their young; and yet ſuch is the extremity of the caſe, that, contrary to the inſtinct of their nature, they *leave their young*, even when they are newly *calved*, and moſt need them, to go ſeek for graſs elſewhere; and if they can find none, they *abandon* them, becauſe not able to *ſuckle* them. It grieved not *the hind* ſo much, that ſhe had no graſs *for her ſelf*, as that ſhe had none *for her young*; which will ſhame thoſe who ſpend that upon their luſts, which they ſhould preſerve for their families. The hind, when ſhe has brought forth her young, is ſaid to have *caſt forth her ſorrows*, Job xxxix. 3. and yet ſhe continues her *cares*; but as it follows there, ſoon ſees the good effect of them, for *her young ones* in a little while *grow up*, and trouble her no more, *ver.* 4. But here the great trouble of all is that ſhe has nothing for them. Nay, one would be ſorry even for the *wild aſſes*, (though they are creatures that none have any great affection for) for though the *barren land* is made *their dwelling* at the beſt, *Job* xxxix. 5, 6. yet even that is now made too hot for them, ſo hot, that they cannot breathe in it; but they get to the *higheſt places* they can, where the air is cooleſt, and *ſnuff up the wind like dragons*, like thoſe creatures that being naturally exceeding hot, are continually panting for breath. Their *eyes fail*, and ſo doth their ſtrength, *becauſe there is no graſs* to ſupport them. The tame aſs that ſerves her owner, is welcome to *his crib*, Iſa. i. 3. and has her keeping for her labour; when the *wild aſs*, that *ſcorns the crying of the driver*, is forced to *live upon air*, and is well enough ſerved for not ſerving: *he that will not labour, let him not eat*.

2. Here is the *language of grace*, *lamenting the iniquity*, and complaining to God of the calamity. The people are not forward to pray, but the prophet here prays for them, and ſo excites them to pray for themſelves, and put words into their mouths, which they may make uſe of, in hopes to ſpeed, *ver.* 7, 8, 9. In this prayer,

1. Sin is humbly confeſſed. When we come to pray for the preventing or removing of any judgment, we muſt always acknowledge that we deſerve it, and a thouſand times worſe. We cannot hope by extenuating the crime, to obtain a mitigation of the puniſhment; but muſt acknowledge, that *our iniquities teſtify againſt us*. Our ſins are witneſſes againſt us, and true penitents ſee them to be ſo. They *teſtify*, for they are plain and evident, we cannot deny the charge; they teſtify *againſt us*, for our conviction; which tends to our preſent ſhame and confuſion, and our future condemnation. They diſprove and overthrow all our pleas for our ſelves; and ſo not only accuſe us, but *anſwer againſt us*. If we boaſt of our own excellencies, and truſt to our own righteouſneſs, our iniquities *teſtify againſt us*, and prove us perverſe. If we quarrel with God as dealing unjuſtly or unkindly with us in afflicting us, our iniquities teſtify againſt us that we do him wrong; for *our backſlidings are many*, and *our revolts are great*, whereby *we have ſinned againſt thee*; too numerous to be concealed, for they are *many*; too heinous to be excuſed, for they are *againſt thee*.

2. Mercy is earneſtly begged. *Though our iniquities teſtify againſt us*, and againſt the granting of the favour which the neceſſity of our caſe calls for, yet *do thou it*. They do not ſay particularly what they would have done; but, as becomes penitents and beggars, they refer themſelves to God; do with us as thou thinkeſt fit, *Judg.* x. 15. Not *do thou it* in this way, or at this time, but *do thou it for thy name's ſake*, i. e. Do that which will be moſt for the glory of thy name. Note, Our beſt pleas in prayer are thoſe that are fetched from the glory of God's own name. Lord, do it that thy mercy may be magnified, thy promiſe fulfilled, and thine intereſt in the world kept up; we have nothing to plead *in our ſelves*, but every thing *in thee*. There is another petition in this prayer, and it is a very modeſt one, *ver.* 9. *Leave us not*, withdraw not thy favour and preſence. Note, We ſhould dread and deprecate God's departures from us, more than the removal of any of all our creature-comforts.

3. Their relation to God, their intereſt in him, and their expectations from him grounded thereupon, are moſt pathetically pleaded with him, *ver.* 8, 9.

1. They look upon him as one they have reaſon to think ſhould deliver them, when they are in diſtreſs, yea, though their iniquities teſtify againſt them; for in him mercy hath often rejoiced againſt judgment. The prophet, like Moſes of old, is willing to make the beſt he can of the caſe of his people, and therefore though he muſt own, that *they have ſinned many a great ſin*,

Exod. xxxii. 31. yet he pleads, *Thou art the hope of Iſrael*; God has encouraged his people to hope in him, in calling himſelf ſo often the God of Iſrael, and the rock of Iſrael, and the holy One of Iſrael, he hath made himſelf the *hope of Iſrael.* He has given Iſrael his word to hope in, and cauſed them to hope in it; and there are thoſe yet in Iſrael that make God alone *their hope*, and expect he will be *their ſaviour in time of trouble*, and they look not for ſalvation in any other; thou haſt many a time been ſo, in the time of their extremity. Note, Since God is his people's all-ſufficient ſaviour, they ought to hope in him in their greateſt ſtraits; and ſince he is their alone Saviour, they ought to hope in him only. They plead likewiſe, *thou art in the midſt of us*, we have the ſpecial tokens of thy preſence with us, thy temple, thine ark, thine oracles; and *we are called by thy name*, the *Iſrael* of God, and therefore we have reaſon to hope thou wilt not leave us; *we are thine, ſave us.* Thy name is called upon us, and therefore what evils we are under reflect diſhonour upon thee, as if thou waſt not able to relieve thine own. The prophet had often told the people, that their profeſſion of religion would not protect them from the judgments of God; yet here he pleads it with God, as Moſes, Exod. xxxii. 11. even this may go far as to temporal puniſhments with a God of mercy, *valeat quantùm valere poteſt.*

2. It therefore grieves them to think, that he doth not appear for their deliverance; and though they do not charge it upon him as *unrighteous*, they humbly plead it with him why he ſhould be *gracious*, for the glory of his own name. For otherwiſe he will ſeem, (1.) *Unconcerned* for his own people: *what will the Egyptians ſay?* They will ſay, Iſrael's hope and ſaviour never minds them, he is become *as a ſtranger in the land*, that doth not at all intereſt himſelf in its intereſts; that his temple, which he called *his reſt for ever*, is no more ſo, but he is in it *as a wayfaring man, that turns aſide to tarry but for a night* in an inn, which he never enquires into the affairs of, nor is in any care about. Though God never is, yet he ſometimes ſeems to be, as if he cared not what became of his church: Chriſt ſlept when his diſciples were in a ſtorm. (2.) *Uncapable* of giving them any relief: the enemies will ſay, becauſe the Lord *was not able to bring* his people to Canaan, he let them *periſh in the wilderneſs*, Numb. xiv. 16. ſo now they will ſay, that either his wiſdom or his power fail him; that either he is *as a man aſtoniſhed*, who, though he has the reaſon of a man, yet being aſtoniſhed, is quite at a loſs, and at his wit's end; or as a *mighty man*, that is over-powered by ſuch as are more mighty, and therefore *cannot ſave*; though *mighty*, yet a *man*, and therefore his power limited. Either of theſe would be a moſt inſufferable reproach to the divine perfections: and therefore why is the God, that we are ſure *is in the midſt of us*, become *as a ſtranger?* Why doth the almighty God ſeem as if he were no more than a mighty man; who when he is *aſtoniſhed*, though he would yet *cannot ſave.* It becomes us in prayer to ſhew our ſelves concerned more for God's glory, than for our own comfort: Lord, *what wilt thou do unto thy great name?*

10. ¶ Thus ſaith the LORD unto this people, Thus have they loved to wander, they have not refrained their feet, therefore the LORD doth not accept them; he will now remember their iniquity, and viſit their ſins. 11. Then ſaid the LORD unto me, Pray not for this people for *their* good. 12. When they faſt I will not hear their cry, and when they offer burnt-offering and an oblation, I will not accept them: but I will conſume them by the ſword, and by the famine, and by the peſtilence. 13. ¶ Then ſaid I, Ah, Lord GOD, behold, the prophets ſay unto them, Ye ſhall not ſee the ſword, neither ſhall ye have famine, but I will give you aſſured peace in this place. 14. Then the LORD ſaid unto me, The prophets propheſy lies in my name; I ſent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither ſpake unto them: they propheſy unto you a falſe viſion and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart. 15. Therefore thus ſaith the LORD concerning the prophets that propheſy in my name, and I ſent them not, yet they ſay, Sword and famine ſhall not be in this land, By ſword and famine ſhall thoſe prophets be conſumed. 16. And the people to whom they propheſy, ſhall be caſt out in the ſtreets of Jeruſalem, becauſe of the famine, and the ſword, and they ſhall have none to bury them, them, their wives, nor their ſons, nor their daughters: for I will pour their wickedneſs upon them.

The diſpute between God and his prophet in this chapter, ſeems to be like that between the owner and the dreſſer of the vineyard concerning the barren fig-tree, *Luke* xiii. 7. The juſtice of the owner condemns it to be *cut down*, the clemency of the dreſſer intercedes for a reprieve: Jeremiah had been earneſt with God in prayer to return in mercy to this people. Now here,

1. God over-rules the plea which he had offered in their favours, and ſhews him that it would not hold. In anſwer to it thus he ſaith, *concerning this people*, ver. 10. He doth not ſay, *concerning my people*, for he diſowns them, becauſe they had broken covenant with him. It is true, they were *called by his name*, and had the tokens of his preſence among them; but they had ſinned, and provoked God to withdraw. This the prophet had owned, and hoped to obtain mercy for them notwithſtanding this, through interceſſion and ſacrifice; therefore God here tells him,

(1.) That they were not duly qualified for a pardon. The prophet had owned *their backſlidings were many*; and though they were ſo, yet there was hopes for them if they returned; but this people ſhews no diſpoſition at all to *return*; they have wandered, and they have *loved to wander*; their backſlidings have been their choice and their pleaſure, which ſhould have been their ſhame and pain, and therefore they will be their ruin. They cannot expect God ſhould take up his reſt with them, when they take ſuch delight in going aſtray from him after their idols. It is not through neceſſity or inadvertency that they *wander*, but they *love it.* Sinners are wanderers from God; their wanderings forfeit God's favour, but it is their *loving* to wander that quite cuts them off from it. They were told what their wandrings would come to, that one ſin would hurry them on to another, and all to ruin; and yet they have not taken warning, and *refrained their feet.* So far were they from returning to their God, that neither his prophets nor his judgments could prevail with them, to give themſelves the leaſt check in a ſinful purſuit. This is that for which God is now reckoning with them: when he denies them rain from heaven, he is *remembring their iniquity*, and *viſiting their ſin*; that is it for which their *fruitful land* is thus *turned into barrenneſs.*

(2.) That they had no reaſon to expect, that the God they had rejected ſhould accept them; no, not though they betook themſelves to faſting and prayer, and put themſelves to the expence of burnt-offerings and ſacrifice. *The Lord doth not accept them*, ver. 10. *He takes no pleaſure in them*, ſo the word is; for what pleaſure can the holy God take in thoſe, that take pleaſure in his rivals, in any ſervice, in any ſociety rather than his. *When they faſt*, (ver. 12.) which is a proper expreſſion of repentance and reformation; *when they offer a burnt-offering and an oblation*, which was deſigned to be an expreſſion of faith in a mediator; though their prayers be thus enforced, and offered up in thoſe vehicles that uſed to be acceptable, yet becauſe they do not proceed from humble penitent and renewed hearts, but ſtill they *love to wander*, therefore *I will not hear their cry*, be it never ſo loud; *nor will I accept them*, neither their perſons, nor their performances. It had been long ſince declared, That *the ſacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord*, and thoſe only are *accepted* that *do well*, Gen. iv. 7.

(3.) That they had forfeited all benefit by the prophet's prayers for them, becauſe they had not regarded his preaching to them. This is the meaning of that repeated prohibition given to the prophet, *ver.* 11. *Pray not thou for this people for their good*, as before, *chap.* xi. 14.—vii. 16. This did not forbid him thus to expreſs his *good will* to them. Moſes continued to intercede for Iſrael, after God had ſaid, *Let me alone*, Exod. xxxii. 10. but it forbad them to expect any *good effect* from it, as long as they *turned away their ear from hearing the law.* Thus was the doom of the impenitent ratified, as that of Saul's rejection was by that word to Samuel, *when wilt thou ceaſe to mourn for Saul?* It therefore follows, *ver.* 12. *I will conſume them*, not only by this *famine*, but by the further ſore judgments of *ſword* and *peſtilence*; for God has many arrows in his quiver, and thoſe that will not be convinced and reclaimed by one, ſhall be conſumed by another.

2. The prophet offers another plea in excuſe of the people's obſtinacy, and it is but an excuſe, but he was willing to ſay whatever their caſe would bear; it is this, That the prophets, who pretended a commiſſion from heaven, impoſed upon them, and flattered them with aſſurances of peace, though they went on in their ſinful way, *ver.* 13. He ſpeaks of it with lamentation, *Ah, Lord God*, the poor people ſeem willing to take notice of what comes in thy name, and there are thoſe who in thy name tell them, that they *ſhall not ſee the ſword or famine*; and they ſay it as from thee, with all the gravity and confidence of prophets, *I will* continue you *in this place*, and will give you *aſſured peace here*, peace of truth; I tell them the contrary, but I am one againſt many, and every one is apt to credit that which makes for them; therefore Lord pity and ſpare them, for *their leaders cauſe them to err.* This excuſe had been of ſome weight if they had not had warning given them before of falſe prophets, and rules by which to diſcover them; ſo that if they were deceived, it was purely their own fault. But this teacheth us, as far as we can with truth, to *make the beſt of bad*, and judge as charitably of others, as their caſe will bear.

3. God not only over-rules this plea, but condemns both the blind leaders and the blind followers to fall together into the ditch.

1. God diſowns the flatteries, *ver.* 14. *They propheſy lies in my name.* They had no commiſſion from God to propheſy at all, *I neither ſent them, nor commanded them, nor ſpake unto them*; they never were employed to go on any errand at all from God, he never made himſelf known to them, much leſs by them to the people; never any word of the Lord came to them, no

call, no warrant, no inſtructions, much leſs did he ſend them on this errand, to rock them aſleep in ſecurity. No; men may flatter themſelves, and Satan may flatter them, but God never doth. It is *a falſe viſion*, and *a thing of nought*. Note, What is falſe and groundleſs, is vain and worthleſs. The viſion that is not true, be it never ſo pleaſing, is *good for nothing*; it is the *deceit of their heart*, a ſpider's web ſpun out of their own bowels, and in it they think to ſhelter themſelves, but it will be ſwept away in a moment, and prove a great cheat. They that oppoſe their own thoughts to God's word, God indeed ſaith ſo, but they think otherwiſe, walk in the *deceit of their heart*, and it will be their ruin.

2. He paſſeth ſentence upon the flatterers, *ver.* 15. As for the prophets, who put this abuſe upon the people, by telling them they ſhall have peace; and this affront upon God, by telling them ſo in God's name; let them know, that they ſhall have no peace themſelves. They ſhall fall firſt by thoſe very judgments, which they have flattered others with the hopes of an exemption from. They undertook to *warrant* people, that *ſword and famine* ſhould *not be in the land*; but it ſhall ſoon appear how little their warrants are good for, when they themſelves ſhall be cut off by *ſword* and *famine*. How ſhould they ſecure others, or fortel peace to them, when they cannot ſecure themſelves, nor have ſuch a foreſight of their own calamities, as to get out of the way of them. Note, The ſoreſt puniſhments await thoſe, who promiſe ſinners impunity in their ſinful ways.

3. He lays the flattered under the ſame doom, *ver.* 16. The *people to whom they propheſy lies*, and who willingly ſuffer themſelves to be thus impoſed upon, they ſhall *die by ſword and famine*. Note, The unbelief of the deceived, with all the falſhood of the deceivers, ſhall not make the divine threatnings of none effect; *ſword* and *famine* will come, whatever they ſay to the contrary; and thoſe will be leaſt ſafe, that are moſt ſecure. Impenitent ſinners will not eſcape the damnation of hell, by ſaying, they can never believe there is ſuch a thing; but will *feel* what they will not *fear*. It is threatned that this people ſhall not only fall by *ſword and famine*, but they ſhall be as it were hanged up in chains, as monuments of that divine juſtice which they ſet at defiance, their bodies ſhall be *caſt out*, even *in the ſtreets of Jeruſalem*, which of all places, one would think, ſhould be kept clear from ſuch nuiſances: There they ſhall lie *unburied*; their neareſt relations, who ſhould do them that laſt office of love, being either ſo poor, that they cannot afford it; or ſo weakned with hunger, that they are not able to attend it; or ſo over-whelmed with grief, that they have no heart to it; or ſo deſtitute of natural affection, that they will not pay them ſo much reſpect. Thus will God *pour their wickedneſs upon them*, i. e. the puniſhment of their wickedneſs; the full vials of God's wrath ſhall be poured on them, to which they have made themſelves obnoxious. Note, When ſinners are overwhelmed with trouble, they muſt in it ſee their own wickedneſs poured upon them. This refers to the wickedneſs both of the falſe prophets and of the people; the blind lead the blind, and both fall together into the ditch, where they will be miſerable comforters one to another.

17. ¶ Therefore thou ſhalt ſay this word unto them, Let mine eyes run down with tears night and day, and let them not ceaſe: for the virgin daughter of my people is broken with a great breach, with a very grievous blow. 18. If I go forth into the field, then behold the ſlain with the ſword; and if I enter into the city, then behold them that are ſick with famine; yea, both the prophet and the prieſt go about into a land that they know not. 19. Haſt thou utterly rejected Judah? hath thy ſoul lothed Zion? why haſt thou ſmitten us, and *there is* no healing for us? we looked for peace, and *there is* no good; and for the time of healing, and behold trouble: 20. We acknowledge, O LORD, our wickedneſs, *and* the iniquity of our fathers, for we have ſinned againſt thee. 21. Do not abhor *us*, for thy names ſake, do not diſgrace the throne of thy glory: remember, break not thy covenant with us. 22. Are there *any* among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cauſe rain? or can the heavens give ſhowers? *art* not thou he, O LORD our God? therefore we will wait upon thee: for thou haſt made all theſe *things*.

The preſent deplorable ſtate of Judah and Jeruſalem is here made the matter of the prophet's lamentation, *ver.* 17, 18. and the occaſion of his prayer and interceſſion for them, *ver.* 19. and I am willing to hope, that the latter as well as the former is by divine direction; and that theſe words, *ver.* 17. *Thus ſhalt thou ſay unto them*, or concerning them, or in their hearing, refer to the interceſſion as well as to the lamentation, and then it amounts to a revocation of the directions given to the prophet not to pray for them, *ver.* 11. However it is plain, by the prayers we find in theſe verſes, that the prophet did not underſtand it as a prohibition, but only as a diſcouragement like that, 1 John v. 16. *I do not ſay he ſhall pray for that.*

Here, 1. The prophet ſtands weeping over the ruins of his country; God directs him to do ſo, that ſhewing himſelf affected, he might if poſſible affect them with the foreſight of the calamities that were coming upon them. Jeremiah muſt not only ſay it to himſelf, but *to them* too, *let mine eyes run down with tears*, ver. 17. Thus he muſt ſignify to them, that he certainly foreſaw *the ſword* coming, and another ſort of *famine*, more grievous even than this which they were now groaning under; this was in the country for want of rain, that in the city through the ſtraitneſs of the ſiege. The prophet ſpeaks as if he already ſaw the miſeries attending the deſcent which the Chaldeans made upon them; *the virgin daughter of my people*, that is as dear to me as a daughter to her father, ſhe *is broken* with a *great breach*, *with a very grievous blow*, much greater and more grievous than any ſhe has yet ſuſtained; for, *ver.* 18. *in the field* multitudes lie dead that were ſlain by the ſword, and in the city multitudes lie dying for want of food: Doleful ſpectacles! The *prophets* and the *prieſts*, the falſe prophets that flattered them with their lies, and the wicked prieſts that perſecuted the true prophets, theſe are now expelled their country, and *go about* either as priſoners and captives whitherſoever their conquerors lead them; or as fugitives and vagabonds, wherever they can find ſhelter and relief, *in a land that they know not*. Some underſtand it of the true prophets, Ezekiel and Daniel, that were carried to Babylon with the reſt. The prophet's eyes muſt run down *with tears day and night*, in proſpect of this, that the people might be convinced, not only that this woful day would infallibly come, and would be a very woful day indeed, but that he was far from deſiring it, and would as gladly have brought them meſſages of peace as their falſe prophets, if he might but have had warrant from heaven to do it. Note, Becauſe God, though he inflicts death on ſinners, yet delights not in it, it becomes his miniſters, though in his name they pronounce the death of ſinners, yet ſadly to lament it.

2. He ſtands up to make interceſſion for them; for who knows but God will yet return and repent? While there is life there is hope, and room for prayer. And though there were many among them, who neither prayed themſelves, nor valued the prophet's prayers, yet there were ſome who were better affected, would join with him in his devotions, and ſet the ſeal of their *Amen* to them.

1. He humbly expoſtulates with God concerning the preſent deplorableneſs of their caſe, *ver.* 19. It was very ſad, for, (1.) Their expectations from their God failed them; they thought he had *avouched* Judah to be *his*, but now it ſeems he hath *utterly rejected* it, and caſt it off; will not own any relation to it, or concern for it. However, they thought Zion was the beloved of his ſoul, was his reſt for ever; but now *his ſoul* even *loaths Zion*, loaths even the ſervices there performed, for the ſake of the ſins there committed. (2.) Then no marvel that all their other expectations failed them; *they were ſmitten*, and their wounds were multiplied, but there was *no healing* for them; they *looked for peace*, becauſe there uſes to come after a ſtorm a calm, and fair weather after a long fit of wet, but *there was no good*; things went ſtill worſe and worſe: They looked for a *healing time*, but could not gain ſo much as a *breathing time*; *behold trouble* at the door, by which we hoped peace would enter. And is it ſo then? *Haſt thou* indeed *rejected Judah*, Juſtly thou mighteſt: *Hath thy ſoul loathed Zion?* We deſerve it ſhould: But wilt thou not at length in wrath remember mercy?

2. He makes a penitent confeſſion of ſin, ſpeaking that language which they all ſhould have ſpoken, tho' but few did, *ver.* 20. *we acknowledge our wickedneſs*, the abounding wickedneſs of our land, and *the iniquity of our fathers*, which we have imitated, and therefore juſtly ſmart for. *We know, we acknowledge*, that *we have ſinned againſt thee*, and therefore thou art juſt in all that is brought upon us, but becauſe we confeſs our ſins, we hope to find thee faithful and juſt in forgiving our ſins.

3. He deprecates God's diſpleaſure, and by faith appeals to his honour and promiſe, *ver.* 21. His petition is, *do not abhor us*; tho' thou afflict us, *do not abhor us*; tho' thy hand be turned *againſt* us, let not thy heart be ſo, nor let *thy mind* be *alienated* from us: They own God might juſtly *abhor* them, they had rendred themſelves *odious* in his eyes, yet when they pray, *do not abhor us*, they mean, receive us into favour again. *Let not thy ſoul loath Zion*, ver. 19. Let not our incenſe be an abomination. They appeal, (1.) To the honour of God, the honour of *his ſcriptures*, by which he hath *made himſelf known*; his *word*, which he hath *magnified above all his name*; *do not abhor us for thy name's ſake*, that name of thine by which we are called, and which we call upon. The honour of *his ſanctuary*; Lord, do not abhor us, for that will *diſgrace the throne of thy glory*, i. e. the temple, which is called *a glorious high throne from the beginning*, chap. xvii. 12. Let not that which has been the *joy of the whole earth* be made a *hiſſing* and an *aſtoniſhment*; we deſerve to have *diſgrace* put upon us, but let it not be ſo as to reflect upon thyſelf; let not the deſolations of the temple give occaſion to the heathen to reproach him that uſed to be worſhipped there, as if he could not or would not protect it, or as if the gods of the Chaldeans had been too hard for him. Note, Good men lay the credit of religion, and its profeſſion in the world, nearer their hearts than any private intereſt or concern of their own; and thoſe are powerful pleas in

prayer

prayer which are fetched from thence, and great ſupports to faith. We may be ſure God will not *diſgrace the throne of his glory* on earth; nor eclipſe the glory of his throne by one providence, but he will ſoon make it ſhine forth, and more brightly than before, by another; God will be no loſer in his honour at the long run. (2.) To the promiſe of God; of this they are humbly bold to put him in mind, *remember* thy covenant *with us*, and *break not* that *covenant*. Not that they had any diſtruſt of his fidelity, or that they thought he needed to be put in mind of his promiſe to them, but what he had ſaid he would plead with himſelf, they take the liberty to plead with him; *then will I remember my covenant*, Lev. xxvi. 42.

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CHAP. XV.

When we left the prophet in the cloſe of the foregoing chapter, ſo pathetically pouring out his prayers before God, we had reaſon to hope, that in this chapter we ſhould find God reconciled to the land, and the prophet brought into a quiet compoſed frame; but to our great ſurprize we find it much otherwiſe as to both. (1.) *Notwithſtanding the prophet's prayers, God here ratifies the ſentence given againſt the people, and abandons them to ruin, turning a deaf ear to all the interceſſions made for them*, ver. 1—9. (2.) *The prophet himſelf, notwithſtanding the ſatisfaction he had in communion with God, ſtill finds himſelf uneaſy and out of temper.* (1.) *He complains to God of his continual ſtruggle with his perſecutors*, ver. 10. (2.) *God aſſures him, that he ſhall be taken under ſpecial protection, though there was a general deſolation coming upon the land*, ver. 11—14. (3.) *He appeals to God concerning his ſincerity in the diſcharge of his prophetical office, and thinks it hard he ſhould not have more of the comfort of it*, ver. 15—18. (4.) *Freſh ſecurity is given him, that upon condition he continue faithful, God will continue his care of him, and his favour to him*, ver. 19—21. *And thus at length we hope he regained the poſſeſſion of his own ſoul.*

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1. What the ſin was upon which this ſevere ſentence was grounded. (1.) It is in remembrance of a *former iniquity*; it is becauſe of Manaſſeh, for that which he did in Jeruſalem, *ver.* 4. What that was we are told, and that it was for that that Jeruſalem was deſtroyed, 1 *Kings* xxiv. 3, 4. It was for his idolatry, and *the innocent blood which he ſhed, which the Lord would not pardon.* He is called *the ſon of Hezekiah*, becauſe his relation to ſo good a father was a great aggravation of his ſin, ſo far was it from being an excuſe of it. The greateſt part of a generation was worn off ſince Manaſſeh's time, yet his ſin is brought into the account; as in Jeruſalem's laſt ruin God brought upon it all *the righteous blood ſhed on the earth*, to ſhew how heavy the guilt of blood will light and lie ſomewhere ſooner or later, and that reprieves are not pardons. (2.) It is in conſideration of their *preſent impenitency.* See how their ſin is deſcribed, *ver.* 6. *Thou haſt forſaken me*, my ſervice, and thy duty to me; *thou art gone backward*, into the ways of contradiction, art become the reverſe of what thou ſhouldſt have been, and of what God by his law would have led thee forward to; and ſee how the impenitency is deſcribed, *ver.* 7. *they return not from their ways*, the ways of their own hearts, into the ways of God's commandments again. There is mercy for thoſe, who have turned aſide, if they will return; but what favour can they expect, that perſiſt in their apoſtaſy?

2. What the ſentence is. It is ſuch as ſpeaks no leſs than an utter ruin.

1. God himſelf abandons and abhors them; *My mind cannot be towards them.* How can it be thought, that the holy God ſhould have any remaining complacency in thoſe, that have ſuch a rooted antipathy to him? It is not in a paſſion, but with a juſt and holy indignation that he ſaith, *caſt them out of my ſight*, as that which is in the higheſt degree odious and offenſive; and *let them go forth*, for I will be troubled with them no more.

2. He will not admit any interceſſion to be made for them, *ver.* 1. Though Moſes and Samuel *ſtood before me*, by prayer or ſacrifice to reconcile me to them, yet I could not be prevailed with to admit them into favour. Moſes and Samuel were two as great favourites of heaven as ever were the bleſſings of this earth, and were particularly famed for the ſucceſs of their mediation between God and his offending people; many a time they had been deſtroyed, if Moſes had not ſtood before him in the breach; and to Samuel's prayers they owe their lives, 1 *Sam.* xii. 19. yet even their interceſſions ſhould not prevail, no, not though they were now in a ſtate of perfection, much leſs Jeremiah's, who was a man now *ſubject to like paſſions* as others. The putting of this as a caſe, *though they ſhould ſtand before me*, ſuppoſeth that they *do not*, and is an intimation, that ſaints in heaven are not interceſſors for ſaints on earth. It is the prerogative of the Eternal Word to be the only mediator in *the other world*, whatever Moſes and Samuel and others were in *this*.

3. He condemns them all to one deſtroying judgment or other. When God caſts them out of his preſence, *whither ſhall they go forth?* ver. 2. Certainly no whither to be ſafe or eaſy; but to be *met* by one judgment, while they are *purſued* by another, till they find themſelves ſurrounded with miſchiefs on all hands, ſo that they cannot eſcape. *Such as are for death*, to *death*: by death here is meant the peſtilence, *Rev.* vi. 8. for it is *death* without viſible means. Thoſe that are *for death to death*, or *for the ſword to the ſword*, i. e. every man ſhall periſh in that way that God hath appointed: the law that appoints the malefactor's death, determines what death he ſhall die. Or, he that is by *his own choice* for *this* judgment, let him take it, or for *that*, let him take it, but by the one or the other they ſhall all fall, and none ſhall eſcape. It is a choice like that which David was *put to*, and was thereby put into a *great ſtrait.* 2 Sam. xxiv. 14. *Captivity* is mentioned laſt, ſome think, becauſe the ſoreſt judgment of

of all, it being both a complication and continuance of miseries. That of *the sword* is again repeated, *ver.* 3. and is made the first of another four frightful set of destroyers, which God will *appoint over them*, as officers over the soldiers, to do what they please with them. As those that escape *the sword*, yet shall be cut off by pestilence, famine, or captivity; so those that fall by the sword, yet divine vengeance has not done with them, that pursues sinners on the other side death; there shall be *dogs to tear* in the city, and *fowls of the air* and *wild beasts* in the field to devour. And if there be any that think to out-run justice, they shall be made the most publick monuments of it; *They shall be removed into all kingdoms of the earth*, ver. 1. like Cain, who that he might be made a spectacle of horror to all, became *a fugitive and a vagabond* in the earth.

4. They shall fall without being relieved; who can do any thing to help them? When (1.) God, even their own God (so he had been) appears against them; *I will stretch out my hand against thee*; which notes a deliberate determined stroke, which will reach far, and wound deep: *ver.* 6. *I am weary with repenting*; it is a strange expression; they had carried themselves so provokingly, especially by their treacherous professions of repentance, that they had put even infinite patience it self to the stretch. God had oftentimes turned away his wrath, when it was ready to break forth against them; but now he will grant no more reprieves. Miserable is the case of those, who have sinned so long against God's mercy, that at length they have sinned it away. (2.) Their own country expels them, and is ready to *spew them out*, as it had done the Canaanites that were before them; for so it was threatned, *Lev.* xviii. 28. *I will fan them with a fan in the gates of the land*, in their own gates, through which they shall be scattered; or, *into the gates of the earth*, i. e. into the cities of all the nations about them. (3.) Their own children, that should assist them when they speak with the enemy in the gate, shall be cut off from them, *ver.* 7. *I will bereave them of children*; so that they shall have little hopes that the next generation will retrieve their affairs, for *I will destroy my people*; and when the inhabitants are slain, the land will soon be desolate. This melancholy article is enlarged upon, *ver.* 8, 9. where we have,

(1.) The destroyer *brought upon them*. When God has bloody work to do, he will find out bloody instruments to do it with. Nebuchadnezzar is here called *a spoiler at noon-day*; not a thief in the night, that is afraid of being discovered, but one that without fear shall break through and destroy all the fences of rights and properties, and this in the face of the sun, and defiance of its light. *I have brought against the mother a young man, a spoiler*, so some read it; for Nebuchadnezzar, when he first invaded Judah, was but a *young man* in the first year of his reign. We read it, *I have brought upon them*, even *against the mother of the young men, a spoiler*, i. e. against Jerusalem, a mother-city, that had a very numerous family of young men: or, that invasion was in a particular manner terrible to those mothers, who had many sons fit for war, who must now jeopard their lives in the high places of the field; and being an unequal match for the enemy, would be likely to fall there, to the inexpressible grief of their poor mothers, that had nursed them with a deal of tenderness. And the same God that brought the spoiler upon them, *caused him to fall upon it*, i. e. upon the spoil delivered to him, *suddenly*, and by surprize; and then *terrors* come *upon the city*. The original is very abrupt, *the city and terrors: O the city*, what a consternation will it be in! O *the terrors* that shall then seize it! Then the *city* and *terrors* shall be *brought together*, that seemed at a distance from each other. *I will cause to fall suddenly upon her* (i. e. upon Jerusalem) *a watcher and terrors*, so Mr. Gataker reads it, for the word is used for a watcher, *Dan.* iv. 13, 23. and the Chaldean soldiers were called *watchers*, chap. iv. 16.

(2.) The *destruction* made by this destroyer. A dreadful slaughter is here described. (1.) The wives are deprived of their husbands; *their widows are increased above the sand of the seas*, so numerous are they now grown: it was promised that the men of Israel (for those only were numbered) should be *as the sand of the sea for multitude*, but now they shall be all cut off, and their widows shall be so. But observe, God saith, *they are increased to me*: tho' the husbands were cut off by the sword of his justice, their poor widows were gathered in the arms of his mercy, who has taken it among the titles of his honour to be *the God of the widows*: widows are said to be *taken into the number*, the number of those whom God has a particular compassion and concern for. (2.) The parents are deprived of their children. *She that has born seven* sons, whom she expected to be the support and joy of her age, now *languisheth* when she hath seen them all cut off by the sword in one day, who had been many years her burthen and care. *She that had many children is waxen feeble*, 1 Sam. ii. 5. See what uncertain comforts children are, and let us therefore rejoice in them, *as tho' we rejoiced not*. When the children are slain, the mother *gives up the ghost*, for her life was bound up in theirs: *Her sun is gone down while it was yet day*; she is bereaved of all her comforts then when she thought her self in the midst of the enjoyment of them. She is now *ashamed and confounded* to think how proud she had been of her sons, how fond of them, and how much she promised her self from them. Some understand by this languishing mother, Jerusalem lamenting the death of her inhabitants as passionately, as ever poor mother bewailed her children. Many are cut off already, *and the residue of them*, who have yet escaped, and it was hoped were reserved to be the seed of another generation, even them *will I deliver to the sword before their enemies*; as the condemned malefactor is delivered to the sheriff to be executed, *saith the Lord*, the judge of heaven and earth, who we are sure herein judgeth right, tho' the judgment seem severe.

5. They shall fall without being pitied, *ver.* 5. *For who shall have pity on thee, O Jerusalem?* When thy God hath *cast thee out of his sight*, and his compassions fail, and are shut up from thee, neither thine enemies, nor thy friends shall have any compassion for thee. They shall have no sympathy with thee, they shall not *bemoan thee*, or be sorry for thee, shall have no concern for thee, shall not go a step out of their way to *ask how thou dost*. For, (1.) Their friends who were expected to do these friendly offices, were all involved with them in the calamities, and had enough to do to bemoan themselves. (2.) It was plain to all their neighbours that they had brought all this misery upon themselves, by their obstinacy in sin, and they might easily have prevented it by repentance and reformation, which they were often in vain called to, and therefore *who can pity them? O Israel, thou hast destroyed thy self.* Those will perish for ever unpitied, that might have been saved upon such easy terms, and would not. (3.) God will thus compleat their misery, he will set their acquaintance as he did Job's, at a distance from them: and his hand, his righteous hand is to be acknowledged in all the unkindnesses of our friends, as well as in all the injuries done us by our foes.

10. ¶ Wo is me, my mother, that thou hast born me a man of strife, and a man of contention to the whole earth: I have neither lent on usury, nor men have lent to me on usury, *yet* every one of them doth curse me. 11. The LORD said, Verily it shall be well with thy remnant, verily I will cause the enemy to entreat thee *well* in the time of evil, and in the time of affliction. 12. Shall iron break the northern iron and the steel? 13. Thy substance and thy treasures will I give to the spoil without price, and *that* for all thy sins, even in all thy borders. 14. And I will make *thee* to pass with thine enemies, into a land *which* thou knowest not: for a fire is kindled in mine anger, *which* shall burn upon you.

Jeremiah is now returned from his publick work, and is retired into his closet; what passed between him and his God there, we have an account of in these and the following verses, which he published afterwards to affect the people with the weight and importance of his messages to them. Here is,

1. The complaint which the prophet makes to God of the many discouragements he met with in his work, *ver.* 10.

(1.) He met with a great deal of *contradiction* and *opposition*. He was a *man of strife and contention to the whole land*, so it might be read, rather than *to the whole earth*, for his business lay only in *that land*; both city and country quarrelled with him, and set themselves against him, and said and did all they could to thwart him. He was a *peaceable* man, gave no provocation to any, nor was apt to resent the provocations given him, and yet *a man of strife*, i. e. not a man *striving*, but a man *striven with*: he was *for peace*, but when he spake, they were *for war*. And whatever they pretended, that which was the real cause of their quarrels with him, was his faithfulness to God, and to their souls: he shewed them their sins that were working their ruin, and put them into a way to prevent that ruin, which was the greatest kindness he could do them, and yet this was it for which they were incensed against him, and looked upon him as their enemy. Even the prince of peace himself was thus a *man of strife*, a sign spoken against, continually *enduring the contradiction of sinners against himself*. And the gospel of peace brings *division*, even to fire and sword; *Mat.* x. 34, 35. *Luke* xii. 49, 51. Now this made Jeremiah very uneasy, even to a degree of impatience; he cried out, *Wo is me, my mother, that thou hast born me*. As if it were his mother's fault that she bore him, and he had better never have been born, than be born to such an uncomfortable life; nay, he is angry that she had *born him a man of strife*; as if he had been *fatally determined* to this by the stars that were in the ascendant at his birth. If he had any meaning of this kind, doubtless it was very much his infirmity, we rather hope it was intended for no more but a pathetical lamentation of his own case. Note, 1. Even those who are most quiet and peaceable, yet if they serve God faithfully, are often made *men of strife*. We can but *follow peace*; have the making only of one side of the bargain, and therefore can but, *as much as in us lies*, live peaceably. 2. It is very uncomfortable to those who are of a peaceable disposition, to live among those that are continually picking quarrels with them. 3. Yet if we cannot live so peaceably as we desire with our neighbours, we must not be so

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1. THEN ſaid the LORD unto me, Though Moſes and Samuel ſtood before me, *yet* my mind *could* not *be* toward this people; caſt *them* out of my ſight, and let them go forth. 2. And it ſhall come to paſs, if they ſay unto thee, Whither ſhall we go forth? then thou ſhalt tell them, Thus ſaith the LORD, Such as *are* for death, to death; and ſuch as *are* for the ſword, to the ſword; and ſuch as *are* for the famine, to the famine; and ſuch as *are* for the captivity, to the captivity. 3. And I will appoint over them four kinds, ſaith the LORD; the ſword to ſlay, and the dogs to tear, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beaſts of the earth, to devour and deſtroy. 4. And I will cauſe them to be removed into all kingdoms of the earth; becauſe of Manaſſeh the ſon of Hezekiah king of Judah, for *that* which he did in Jeruſalem. 5. For who ſhall have pity upon thee, O Jeruſalem? or who ſhall bemone thee? or who ſhall go aſide to ask how thou doeſt? 6. Thou haſt forſaken me, ſaith the LORD, thou art gone backward: therefore will I ſtretch out my hand againſt thee, and deſtroy thee; I am weary with repenting. 7. And I will fan them with a fan in the gates of the land: I will bereave *them* of children, I will deſtroy my people, *ſith* they return not from their ways. 8. Their widows are increaſed to me above the ſand of the ſeas: I have brought upon them againſt the mother of the young men, a ſpoiler at noon-day: I have cauſed *him* to fall upon it ſuddenly, and terrors upon the city. 9. She that hath born ſeven, languiſheth: ſhe hath given up the ghoſt, her ſun is gone down while *it was* yet day: ſhe hath been aſhamed and confounded, and the reſidue of them will I deliver to the ſword before their enemies, ſaith the LORD.

We ſcarce find any where more pathetical expreſſions of divine wrath againſt a provoking people, than we have here in theſe verſes. The prophet had prayed earneſtly for them, and found ſome among them to join with him; and yet not ſo much as a reprieve was gained, or the leaſt mitigation of the judgment; but this anſwer is given to the prophet's prayers, that the decree was gone forth, was irreverſible, and would ſhortly be executed. Obſerve here,

1. What the ſin was upon which this ſevere ſentence was grounded. (1.) It is in remembrance of a *former iniquity*; it is becauſe of Manaſſeh, for that which he did in Jeruſalem, *ver.* 4. What that was we are told, and that it was for that that Jeruſalem was deſtroyed, 1 *Kings* xxiv. 3, 4. It was for his idolatry, and *the innocent blood which he ſhed, which the Lord would not pardon.* He is called *the ſon of Hezekiah*, becauſe his relation to ſo good a father was a great aggravation of his ſin, ſo far was it from being an excuſe of it. The greateſt part of a generation was worn off ſince Manaſſeh's time, yet his ſin is brought into the account; as in Jeruſalem's laſt ruin God brought upon it all *the righteous blood ſhed on the earth*, to ſhew how heavy the guilt of blood will light and lie ſomewhere ſooner or later, and that reprieves are not pardons. (2.) It is in conſideration of their *preſent impenitency*. See how their ſin is deſcribed, *ver.* 6. *Thou haſt forſaken me*, my ſervice, and thy duty to me; *thou art gone backward*, into the ways of contradiction, art become the reverſe of what thou ſhouldſt have been, and of what God by his law would have led thee forward to; and ſee how the impenitency is deſcribed, *ver.* 7. *they return not from their ways*, the ways of their own hearts, into the ways of God's commandments again. There is mercy for thoſe, who have turned aſide, if they will return; but what favour can they expect, that perſiſt in their apoſtaſy?

2. What the ſentence is. It is ſuch as ſpeaks no leſs than an utter ruin.

1. God himſelf abandons and abhors them; *My mind cannot be towards them.* How can it be thought, that the holy God ſhould have any remaining complacency in thoſe, that have ſuch a rooted antipathy to him? It is not in a paſſion, but with a juſt and holy indignation that he ſaith, *caſt them out of my ſight*, as that which is in the higheſt degree odious and offenſive; and *let them go forth*, for I will be troubled with them no more.

2. He will not admit any interceſſion to be made for them, *ver.* 1. Though Moſes and Samuel *ſtood before me*, by prayer or ſacrifice to reconcile me to them, yet I could not be prevailed with to admit them into favour. Moſes and Samuel were two as great favourites of heaven as ever were the bleſſings of this earth, and were particularly famed for the ſucceſs of their mediation between God and his offending people; many a time they had been deſtroyed, if Moſes had not ſtood before him in the breach; and to Samuel's prayers they owe their lives, 1 *Sam.* xii. 19. yet even their interceſſions ſhould not prevail, no, not though they were now in a ſtate of perfection, much leſs Jeremiah's, who was a man now *ſubject to like paſſions* as others. The putting of this as a caſe, *though they ſhould ſtand before me*, ſuppoſeth that they *do not*, and is an intimation, that ſaints in heaven are not interceſſors for ſaints on earth. It is the prerogative of the Eternal Word to be the only mediator in *the other world*, whatever Moſes and Samuel and others were in *this*.

3. He condemns them all to one deſtroying judgment or other. When God caſts them out of his preſence, *whither ſhall they go forth?* ver. 2. Certainly no whither to be ſafe or eaſy; but to be *met* by one judgment, while they are *purſued* by another, till they find themſelves ſurrounded with miſchiefs on all hands, ſo that they cannot eſcape. *Such as are for death*, to *death*: by death here is meant the peſtilence, *Rev.* vi. 8. for it is *death* without viſible means. Thoſe that are *for death to death*, or *for the ſword to the ſword*, i. e. every man ſhall periſh in that way that God hath appointed: the law that appoints the malefactor's death, determines what death he ſhall die. Or, he that is by *his own choice* for *this* judgment, let him take it, or for *that*, let him take it, but by the one or the other they ſhall all fall, and none ſhall eſcape. It is a choice like that which David was *put to*, and was thereby put into a *great ſtrait*. 2 Sam. xxiv. 14. *Captivity* is mentioned laſt, ſome think, becauſe the ſoreſt judgment of

of all, it being both a complication and continuance of miseries. That of *the sword* is again repeated, *ver.* 3. and is made the first of another four frightful set of destroyers, which God will *appoint over them*, as officers over the soldiers, to do what they please with them. As those that escape *the sword*, yet shall be cut off by pestilence, famine, or captivity; so those that fall by the sword, yet divine vengeance has not done with them, that pursues sinners on the other side death; there shall be *dogs to tear* in the city, and *fowls of the air* and *wild beasts* in the field to devour. And if there be any that think to out-run justice, they shall be made the most publick monuments of it; *They shall be removed into all kingdoms of the earth*, ver. 1. like Cain, who that he might be made a spectacle of horror to all, became *a fugitive and a vagabond* in the earth.

4. They shall fall without being relieved; who can do any thing to help them? When (1.) God, even their own God (so he had been) appears against them; *I will stretch out my hand against thee*; which notes a deliberate determined stroke, which will reach far, and wound deep: *ver.* 6. *I am weary with repenting*; it is a strange expression; they had carried themselves so provokingly, especially by their treacherous professions of repentance, that they had put even infinite patience it self to the stretch. God had oftentimes turned away his wrath, when it was ready to break forth against them; but now he will grant no more reprieves. Miserable is the case of those, who have sinned so long against God's mercy, that at length they have sinned it away. (2.) Their own country expels them, and is ready to *spew them out*, as it had done the Canaanites that were before them; for so it was threatned, *Lev.* xviii. 28. *I will fan them with a fan in the gates of the land*, in their own gates, through which they shall be scattered; or, *into the gates of the earth*, i. e. into the cities of all the nations about them. (3.) Their own children, that should assist them when they speak with the enemy in the gate, shall be cut off from them, *ver.* 7. *I will bereave them of children*; so that they shall have little hopes that the next generation will retrieve their affairs, for *I will destroy my people*; and when the inhabitants are slain, the land will soon be desolate. This melancholy article is enlarged upon, *ver.* 8, 9. where we have,

(1.) The destroyer *brought upon them*. When God has bloody work to do, he will find out bloody instruments to do it with. Nebuchadnezzar is here called *a spoiler at noon-day*; not a thief in the night, that is afraid of being discovered, but one that without fear shall break through and destroy all the fences of rights and properties, and this in the face of the sun, and defiance of its light. *I have brought against the mother a young man, a spoiler*, so some read it; for Nebuchadnezzar, when he first invaded Judah, was but a *young man* in the first year of his reign. We read it, *I have brought upon them*, even *against the mother of the young men, a spoiler*, i. e. against Jerusalem, a mother-city, that had a very numerous family of young men: or, that invasion was in a particular manner terrible to those mothers, who had many sons fit for war, who must now jeopard their lives in the high places of the field; and being an unequal match for the enemy, would be likely to fall there, to the inexpressible grief of their poor mothers, that had nursed them with a deal of tenderness. And the same God that brought the spoiler upon them, *caused him to fall upon it*, i. e. upon the spoil delivered to him, *suddenly*, and by surprize; and then *terrors* come *upon the city*. The original is very abrupt, *the city and terrors: O the city*, what a consternation will it be in! O *the terrors* that shall then seize it! Then the *city* and *terrors* shall be *brought together*, that seemed at a distance from each other. *I will cause to fall suddenly upon her* (i. e. upon Jerusalem) *a watcher and terrors*, so Mr. Gataker reads it, for the word is used for a watcher, *Dan.* iv. 13, 23. and the Chaldean soldiers were called *watchers*, chap. iv. 16.

(2.) The *destruction* made by this destroyer. A dreadful slaughter is here described. (1.) The wives are deprived of their husbands; *their widows are increased above the sand of the seas*, so numerous are they now grown: it was promised that the men of Israel (for those only were numbered) should be *as the sand of the sea for multitude*, but now they shall be all cut off, and their widows shall be so. But observe, God saith, *they are increased to me*: tho' the husbands were cut off by the sword of his justice, their poor widows were gathered in the arms of his mercy, who has taken it among the titles of his honour to be *the God of the widows*: widows are said to be *taken into the number*, the number of those whom God has a particular compassion and concern for. (2.) The parents are deprived of their children. *She that has born seven* sons, whom she expected to be the support and joy of her age, now *languisheth* when she hath seen them all cut off by the sword in one day, who had been many years her burthen and care. *She that had many children is waxen feeble*, 1 Sam. ii. 5. See what uncertain comforts children are, and let us therefore rejoice in them, *as tho' we rejoiced not*. When the children are slain, the mother *gives up the ghost*, for her life was bound up in theirs: *Her sun is gone down while it was yet day*; she is bereaved of all her comforts then when she thought her self in the midst of the enjoyment of them. She is now *ashamed and confounded* to think how proud she had been of her sons, how fond of them, and how much she promised her self from them. Some understand by this languishing mother, Jerusalem lamenting the death of her inhabitants as passionately, as ever poor mother bewailed her children. Many are cut off already, *and the residue of them*, who have yet escaped, and it was hoped were reserved to be the seed of another generation, even them *will I deliver to the sword before their enemies*; as the condemned malefactor is delivered to the sheriff to be executed, *saith the Lord*, the judge of heaven and earth, who we are sure herein judgeth right, tho' the judgment seem severe.

5. They shall fall without being pitied, *ver.* 5. *For who shall have pity on thee, O Jerusalem?* When thy God hath *cast thee out of his sight*, and his compassions fail, and are shut up from thee, neither thine enemies, nor thy friends shall have any compassion for thee. They shall have no sympathy with thee, they shall not *bemoan thee*, or be sorry for thee, shall have no concern for thee, shall not go a step out of their way to *ask how thou dost*. For, (1.) Their friends who were expected to do these friendly offices, were all involved with them in the calamities, and had enough to do to bemoan themselves. (2.) It was plain to all their neighbours that they had brought all this misery upon themselves, by their obstinacy in sin, and they might easily have prevented it by repentance and reformation, which they were often in vain called to, and therefore *who can pity them? O Israel, thou hast destroyed thy self.* Those will perish for ever unpitied, that might have been saved upon such easy terms, and would not. (3.) God will thus compleat their misery, he will set their acquaintance as he did Job's, at a distance from them: and his hand, his righteous hand is to be acknowledged in all the unkindnesses of our friends, as well as in all the injuries done us by our foes.

10. ¶ Wo is me, my mother, that thou hast born me a man of strife, and a man of contention to the whole earth: I have neither lent on usury, nor men have lent to me on usury, *yet* every one of them doth curse me. 11. The LORD said, Verily it shall be well with thy remnant, verily I will cause the enemy to entreat thee *well* in the time of evil, and in the time of affliction. 12. Shall iron break the northern iron and the steel? 13. Thy substance and thy treasures will I give to the spoil without price, and *that* for all thy sins, even in all thy borders. 14. And I will make *thee* to pass with thine enemies, into a land *which* thou knowest not: for a fire is kindled in mine anger, *which* shall burn upon you.

Jeremiah is now returned from his publick work, and is retired into his closet; what passed between him and his God there, we have an account of in these and the following verses, which he published afterwards to affect the people with the weight and importance of his messages to them. Here is,

1. The complaint which the prophet makes to God of the many discouragements he met with in his work, *ver.* 10.

(1.) He met with a great deal of *contradiction* and *opposition*. He was a *man of strife and contention to the whole land*, so it might be read, rather than *to the whole earth*, for his business lay only in *that land*; both city and country quarrelled with him, and set themselves against him, and said and did all they could to thwart him. He was a *peaceable* man, gave no provocation to any, nor was apt to resent the provocations given him, and yet *a man of strife*, i. e. not a man *striving*, but a man *striven with*: he was *for peace*, but when he spake, they were *for war*. And whatever they pretended, that which was the real cause of their quarrels with him, was his faithfulness to God, and to their souls: he shewed them their sins that were working their ruin, and put them into a way to prevent that ruin, which was the greatest kindness he could do them, and yet this was it for which they were incensed against him, and looked upon him as their enemy. Even the prince of peace himself was thus a *man of strife*, a sign spoken against, continually *enduring the contradiction of sinners against himself*. And the gospel of peace brings *division*, even to fire and sword; *Mat.* x. 34, 35. *Luke* xii. 49, 51. Now this made Jeremiah very uneasy, even to a degree of impatience; he cried out, *Wo is me, my mother, that thou hast born me*. As if it were his mother's fault that she bore him, and he had better never have been born, than be born to such an uncomfortable life; nay, he is angry that she had *born him a man of strife*; as if he had been *fatally determined* to this by the stars that were in the ascendant at his birth. If he had any meaning of this kind, doubtless it was very much his infirmity, we rather hope it was intended for no more but a pathetical lamentation of his own case. Note, 1. Even those who are most quiet and peaceable, yet if they serve God faithfully, are often made *men of strife*. We can but *follow peace*; have the making only of one side of the bargain, and therefore can but, *as much as in us lies*, live peaceably. 2. It is very uncomfortable to those who are of a peaceable disposition, to live among those that are continually picking quarrels with them. 3. Yet if we cannot live so peaceably as we desire with our neighbours, we must not be so

disturbed at it as thereby to lose the repose of our own minds, and put our selves upon the fret.

(2.) He met with a great deal of *contempt, contumely, and reproach.* They every one of them *cursed him*; they branded him as a turbulent factious man, as an incendiary, and a sower of discord and sedition. They ought to have *blessed* him, and to have blessed God for him; but they were arrived to such a pitch of enmity against God and his word, that for his sake they *cursed* his messenger, spoke ill of him, wished ill to him, did all they could to make him odious, they all did so; he had scarce one friend in Judah or Jerusalem that would give him a good word. Note, It is often the lot of the best of men to be put under the worst of characters; *so persecuted they the prophets.* But one would be apt to suspect, that surely Jeremiah had given them some provocation, else he could not have lost himself thus: no, not the least, I have neither *lent* money, nor *borrowed* money; have been neither *creditor* nor *debtor*, for so general is the signification of the words here. (1.) It is implied here, that those who deal much in the business of this world, are often involved thereby in *strife* and *contention*; *meum* and *tuum* are the great make-bates, lenders and borrowers sue and are sued, and great dealers often get a deal of ill-will. (2.) It was an instance of Jeremiah's great prudence, and is written for our learning, that being called to be a prophet, he *entangled not himself in the affairs of this life*, but kept clear from them, that he might apply himself the more closely to the business of his profession, and might not give the least umbrage of suspicion that he aimed at secular advantages in it, nor any occasion to his neighbours to contend with him. He *put out* no money, for he was no usurer, nor indeed had no money to lend: he *took up* no money, for he was no purchaser, nor merchant, no spend-thrift. He was perfectly dead to this world, and the things of it: a very little served to keep him, and we find, *chap.* xvi. 2. he had neither wife nor children to keep. And yet, (3.) Tho' he carried himself thus discreetly, and so as one would have thought should have gained him an universal esteem, yet he lay under a general odium, through the iniquity of the times. Blessed be God, as bad as things are with us, they are not *so bad*, but there are those with whom virtue has its praise; yet let not those who carry themselves most prudently, think it strange if they have not the respect and esteem they deserve. *Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.*

2. The answer which God gave to this complaint. Tho' there was in it a mixture of passion and infirmity, yet God graciously took cognizance of it, because it was *for his sake* that the prophet suffered reproach. In this answer,

1. God assures him that he should *weather the storm*, and be made *easy at last*, ver. 11. Tho' his neighbours quarrelled with him for what he did in the discharge of his office, yet God accepted him, and promised to stand by him. And it is in the original expressed in the form of an oath, *if I* take not care of thee, let me never be counted faithful; *verily, it shall go well with thy remnant*, i. e. with the remainder of thy life, for so the word signifies. The *residue* of thy days shall be more comfortable to thee, than those hitherto have been. *Thy end shall be good*; so the Chaldee reads it. Note, It is a great and sufficient support to the people of God, that how troublesome soever their way may be, it shall be well with them in their latter end, *Psal.* xxxvii. 37. They have still a *remnant*, a *residue*, something *behind*, and *left* in reserve, which will be sufficient to balance all their grievances, and the hope of it to make them easy. It should seem, Jeremiah, besides the vexation that his people gave him, was uneasy at the apprehension he had of sharing largely in the publick judgments which he foresaw coming; and tho' he mentioned not this, God replied to his thought of it; as to Moses, *Exod.* iv. 19. Jeremiah thought if his friends were thus abusive to him, what would his enemies be? And God had thought fit to awaken in him an expectation of this kind, *chap.* xii. 5. But here he quiets his mind with this promise, *Verily, I will cause the enemy to intreat thee well in the time of evil*, when all about thee shall be laid waste. Note, God has all mens hearts in his hands, and can turn those to favour his servants, whom they were most afraid of. And the prophets of the Lord have often met with fairer and better treatment among open enemies, than among those that call themselves his people. When we see trouble coming, and it looks very threatning, yet let us not despair, but hope in God, because it may prove better than likely. This promise was accomplished, when Nebuchadnezzar having taken the city, charged the captain of the guard to be kind to Jeremiah, and let him have every thing he had a mind to, *chap.* xxxix. 11. 12. The following words, *ver.* 12. *Shall common iron break the northern iron, and the steel*, or *brass*, being compared with the promise God made to Jeremiah, *chap.* i. 18. that he would make him an *iron pillar*, and *brazen walls*, seem intended for his comfort. They were continually clashing with him, and were rough and hard *as iron*, but Jeremiah being armed with power and courage from on high, is as *northern iron*, which is naturally stronger, and as *steel* which is hardened by art, and therefore they shall not prevail against him, compare this with *Ezek.* ii. 6.—iii. 8, 9. And he might the better bear their quarrelling with him when he was sure of the victory.

2. God assures him that his enemies and persecutors should be *lost in the storm*, should be ruined at last, and therein the word of God in his mouth should be accomplished; and he should be proved a true prophet, *ver.* 13, 14. God here turns his speech from the prophet to the people. And to them also, *ver.* 12. may be applied, *Shall iron break the northern iron, and the steel?* Shall their courage and strength, and the most hardy and vigorous of their efforts be able to contest either with the counsel of God, or with the army of the Chaldeans, which are as inflexible, as invincible as the *northern iron*, and *the steel*. Let them therefore hear their doom; *Thy substance and thy treasure will I give to the spoil*, and that *without price*, the spoilers shall have it *gratis*, it shall be to them a cheap and easy prey. Observe, The prophet was poor, he neither *lent* nor *borrowed*, he had nothing to lose, neither *substance* nor *treasure*, and therefore the enemy will treat him well, *Cantabit vacuus coram latrone viator:* But the people that had great estates in money and land, would be slain for what they had, or the enemy finding they had much, would use them hardly to make them confess more. And it is their own iniquity that herein corrects them, it is *for all thy sins, even in all thy borders:* all parts of the country, even those which lay *most remote*, had contributed to the national guilt, and all shall now be brought to account. Let not one tribe lay the blame upon another, but each take shame to themselves; it is for *all thy sins in all thy borders.* Thus shall they stay at home till they see their estates ruined, and then they shall be carried into captivity, to spend the sad remains of a miserable life in slavery: *I will make thee to pass with thine enemies*, that shall lead thee in triumph, *into a land that thou knowest not*, and therefore canst expect to find no comfort in it. And all this is the fruit of God's wrath: it is *a fire kindled in mine anger, which shall burn upon you*, and if not extinguished in time will burn eternally.

15. ¶ O LORD, thou knowest, remember me, and visit me, and revenge me of my persecutors, take me not away in thy long-suffering: know that for thy sake I have suffered rebuke. 16. Thy words were found, and I did eat them, and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart, for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts. 17. I sat not in the assembly of the mockers, nor rejoiced: I sat alone because of thy hand: for thou hast filled me with indignation. 18. Why is my pain perpetual? and my wound incurable, *which* refuseth to be cured? wilt thou be altogether unto me as a liar, *and as* waters *that* fail? 19. ¶ Therefore thus saith the LORD, If thou return, then will I bring thee again, *and* thou shalt stand before me: and if thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth: let them return unto thee, but return not thou unto them. 20. And I will make thee unto this people a fenced brasen wall, and they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee; for I *am* with thee to save thee, and to deliver thee, saith the LORD. 21. And I will deliver thee out of the hand of the wicked, and I will redeem thee out of the hand of the terrible.

Here, as before, we have,

1. The prophet's humble address to God, containing a remonstrance both of his integrity, and of the hardships he underwent notwithstanding. It is matter of comfort to us, that whatever ails us, we have a God to go to, before whom we may spread our case, and to whose omniscience we may appeal, as the prophet here, *O Lord, thou knowest.* Thou dost know my sincerity, which men are resolved they will not acknowledge; thou dost know my distress, which men disdain to take notice of. Observe here,

1. What it is that the prophet prays for, *ver.* 15. (1.) That God would *consider his case*, and be mindful of him. *O Lord, remember me.* Think upon me for good. (2.) That God would *communicate strength* and comfort to him; *visit me*, not only remember me, but let me know that thou remembrest me, that thou art nigh unto me. (3.) That he would appear for him against those that did him wrong, *revenge me of my persecutors*, or rather, *vindicate me from my persecutors*: Give judgment against them, and let that judgment be executed so far as is necessary for my vindication, and to compel them to acknowledge that they have done me wrong; and further, a good man will not desire that God would revenge him. Let something be done to convince the world that (whatever blasphemers say to the contrary) Jeremiah is a *righteous man*, and the God whom he serves is a *righteous God*. (4.) That he would yet spare him and continue

tinue him in the land of the living; *take me not away* by a ſudden ſtroke; but *in thy long ſuffering* lengthen out my days. The beſt men will own themſelves ſo obnoxious to God's wrath, that they are indebted to his patience for the continuance of their lives. Or, while thou exerciſeſt *long ſuffering* towards my perſecutors, let not them prevail to *take me away*. Though in a paſſion he complained of his birth, *ver.* 10. yet he deſires here that his death might not be haſtened; for *life is ſweet* to nature; the life of an uſeful man is ſo to grace. *I pray not that thou ſhouldſt take them out of the world.*

2. What it is that he *pleads* with God for mercy, and relief, againſt his enemies, perſecutors, and ſlanderers. (1.) That God's honour was intereſted in his caſe. *Know*, and make it known, *that for thy ſake I have ſuffered rebuke.* Thoſe that lay themſelves open to reproach by their own fault and folly, have great reaſon to bear it patiently, but no reaſon to expect that God ſhould appear for them: But if it is for doing well that we ſuffer ill, and *for righteouſneſs ſake* that we have all manner of evil ſaid againſt us, we may hope that God will vindicate *our* honour with *his own.* To the ſame purpoſe, *ver.* 16. *I am called by thy name, O Lord of hoſts*; it was for that reaſon that his enemies hated him, and therefore for that reaſon he promiſed himſelf that God would own him, and ſtand by him.

(2.) That the word of God which he was employed to preach to others, he had experienced the power and pleaſure of in his own ſoul, and therefore had the graces of the Spirit to qualify him for the divine favour, as well as his gifts. We find ſome rejected of God, who yet could ſay, *Lord, we have propheſied in thy name*: But Jeremiah could ſay more, *ver.* 16. *Thy words were found*, found *by me*; he ſearched the ſcriptures, diligently ſtudied the law, and found that in it which was reviving to him: If we *ſeek* we ſhall find; found *for me*, the words which he was to deliver to others, were laid ready to his hand, were brought to him by inſpiration, *and I did* not only taſte them, but *eat* them, received them entirely, converſed with them intimately, they were welcome to me, as food to one that is hungry: I entertained them, digeſted them, turned them *in ſuccum & ſanguinem*, into blood and ſpirits, and was my ſelf delivered into the mold of thoſe truths which I was to deliver to others. The prophet was bid to *eat the roll*, Ezek. ii. 8. *Rev.* x. 9. *I did eat it*, that is, as it follows, it was *to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart*, nothing could be more agreeable. Underſtand it, (1.) Of the meſſage it ſelf he was to deliver. Though he was to foretel the ruin of his country, which was dear to him, and in the ruin of which he could not but have a deep ſhare, yet all natural affections were ſwallowed up in zeal for God's glory, and even theſe meſſages of wrath being divine meſſages, were a ſatisfaction to him. He alſo *rejoiced* at firſt in hope that the people would take warning, and prevent the judgment. Or, (2.) Of the commiſſion he received to deliver this meſſage: Though the work he was called to was not attended with any ſecular advantages, but on the contrary expoſed him to contempt and perſecution, yet becauſe it put him in a way to ſerve God, and do good, he took pleaſure in it, was glad to be ſo employed, and it was his *meat and drink to do the will of him that ſent him*, John iv. 34. Or, (3.) Of the promiſe God gave him, that he would aſſiſt and own him in his work, *chap.* i. 8. he was ſatisfied in that, and depended upon it, and therefore hoped it ſhould not fail him.

(3.) That he had applied himſelf to the diſcharge of his office with all poſſible gravity and ſerioufneſs, and ſelf-denial, though he had had of late but little ſatisfaction in it, *ver.* 17. (1.) It is his *comfort* that he had given up himſelf wholly to the buſineſs of his office, and had done nothing diſagreeable to it; nothing either to *divert* himſelf from it, or *diſfit* himſelf for it. He kept no unſuitable company, denied himſelf the uſe even of lawful recreations, abſtained from every thing that looked like levity, leſt thereby he ſhould make himſelf mean and leſs regarded. He *ſat alone*, ſpent a deal of time in his cloſet, *becauſe of the hand* of the Lord that was ſtrong upon him to carry him on in his work, *Ezek.* iii. 14. *For thou haſt filled me with indignation*, with ſuch meſſages of wrath againſt this people, as have made me always penſive. Note, It will be a comfort to God's miniſters when men deſpiſe them, if they have the teſtimonies of their conſciences for them, that they have not by any vain, fooliſh carriage made themſelves deſpicable; that they have been dead not only to the wealth of the world, as this prophet was, *ver.* 10. but to the pleaſures of it too, as here. But, (2.) It is his *complaint* that he had but little pleaſure in his work. It was at firſt the rejoicing of his heart, but of late it had made him melancholy; ſo that he had no heart to *ſit in the meeting of thoſe that make merry*, he cared not for company, for indeed no company cared for him, he *ſat alone* fretting at the peoples obſtinacy, and the little ſucceſs of his labours among them; this filled him with a holy *indignation.* Note, It is the folly and infirmity of ſome good people, that they loſe much of the pleaſantneſs of their religion by the fretfulneſs and uneaſineſs of their natural temper, which they humour and indulge inſtead of mortifying it.

(4.) He throws himſelf upon God's pity and promiſe in a very paſſionate expoſtulation, *ver.* 18. *Why is my pain perpetual*, and nothing done to eaſe it? *The wounds* which my enemies are continually giving, both to my peace, and to my reputation, *incurable*, and nothing done to retrieve either my comfort, or my credit? I once little thought I ſhould have been thus neglected; will the God that has promiſed me his preſence, be to me *as a liar*; the God on whom I depend, be to me *as waters that fail?* We are willing to make the beſt we can of it, and to take it as an appeal; (1.) To the *mercy* of God; I know he will not let the *pain* of his ſervant be *perpetual*, but he will eaſe it, will not let his wound be incurable, but he will heal it; and therefore I will not deſpair. (2.) To his *faithfulneſs. Wilt thou be to me as a liar?* No, I know thou wilt not; God is not a man that he ſhould lie. The fountain of life will never be to his people as *waters that fail.*

2. God's gracious anſwer to this addreſs, *ver.* 19, 20, 21. Though the prophet betrayed much human frailty in his addreſs, yet God vouchſafed to anſwer him with good words, and comfortable words, for he knows our frame. Obſerve,

1. What God here requires of him as the condition of the further favours he deſigned him. Jeremiah had done and ſuffered much for God, yet God is no debtor to him, but he is ſtill upon his good behaviour. God will own him. But,

(1.) He muſt *recover his temper*, and be *reconciled to his work*, and friends with it again, and not quarrel with it any more as he had done. He muſt *return*; muſt ſhake off theſe diſtruſtful, diſcontented thoughts and paſſions, and not give way to them, muſt regain the peaceable poſſeſſion and enjoyment of himſelf, and reſolve to be eaſy. Note, When we have ſtept aſide into any diſagreeable frame or way, our care muſt be to *return*, and compoſe our ſelves into a right temper of mind again; and then we may expect God will *help us*, if thus we endeavour to *help our ſelves.*

(2.) He muſt reſolve to be *faithful in his work*, for he could not any longer expect the divine protection than he did approve himſelf ſo. Though there was no cauſe at all to charge Jeremiah with unfaithfulneſs, and God knew his heart to be ſincere, yet God ſaw fit to give him this caution. Thoſe that do their duty, muſt not take it ill to be told their duty. In two things he muſt be faithful.

(1.) He muſt diſtinguiſh between ſome and others of thoſe he preached to. Thou muſt *take forth the precious from the vile.* The righteous are the *precious*, be they never ſo mean and poor, the wicked are the *vile*, be they never ſo rich and great: In our congregations theſe are *mixed*, wheat and chaff in the ſame floor, we cannot diſtinguiſh them by name, but we muſt by character, and muſt give to each their portion, ſpeaking comfort to *precious* ſaints, and terror to *vile* ſinners; neither *making the heart of the righteous ſad*, nor *ſtrengthning the hands of the wicked*, Ezek. xiii. 27. but *rightly dividing the word of truth.* Miniſters muſt take thoſe whom they ſee to be *precious* into their boſoms, and not *ſit alone* as Jeremiah did, but keep up converſation with thoſe they may do good to, and get good by.

(2.) He muſt cloſely adhere to his inſtructions, and not in the leaſt vary from them, *let them return to thee, but return not thou to them.* That is, he muſt do the utmoſt he can in his preaching to bring people up to the mind of God; tell them they muſt at their peril comply with that: They that had flown off from him, that did not like the terms upon which God's favour was offered to them, *let them return to thee*, and upon ſecond thoughts, come up to the terms, and ſtrike the bargain: but do not thou *return to them*, do not compliment them, or comply with them, nor think to make the matter eaſier to them than the word of God has made it. Mens hearts and lives muſt come up to God's law, and comply with that, for God's law will never come down to them, or comply with them.

2. What he here promiſeth him upon the performance of theſe conditions. If he approve himſelf well,

1. God will quiet his mind, and pacify the preſent tumult of his ſpirits. *If thou return, I will bring thee again*; will *reſtore thy ſoul*, as *Pſal.* xxiii. 3. The beſt and ſtrongeſt ſaints if at any time they have gone aſide out of the right way, and are determined to *return*, yet need the grace of God to *bring them again.*

2. God will employ him in his ſervice as a prophet, work which, even in thoſe bad times, had comfort and honour enough in it to be its own wages. *Thou ſhalt ſtand before me*, to receive inſtructions from me, as a ſervant from his maſter, and *thou ſhalt be as my mouth* to deliver my meſſages to the people, as an embaſſador is *the mouth* of the prince that ſends him. Note, faithful miniſters are God's *mouth* to us; they are ſo to look upon themſelves, and to ſpeak God's mind, and *as becomes the oracles of God*; and we are ſo to look upon them, and to hear God ſpeaking to us by them. Obſerve, If thou keep cloſe to thine inſtructions, *thou ſhalt be as my mouth*, not otherwiſe; ſo far and no farther God will ſtand by miniſters, as they go by the written word. *Thou ſhalt be as my mouth*, i. e. what thou ſayeſt ſhall be made good, as if I my ſelf had ſaid it. See *Iſa.* xliv. 26. 1 *Sam.* iii. 19.

3. He ſhall have ſtrength and courage to face the many difficulties he meets with in his work, and his ſpirit ſhall not fail again as now it doth, *ver.* 20. *I will make thee unto this people as a fenced brazen wall*, which the ſtorm batters, and beats violently upon, but cannot ſhake. *Return not thou to them*, by any ſinful compliances, and then truſt thy God to arm thee by his grace

with holy resolutions. Be not *sneaking*, and God will make thee *daring*. He had complained, that he was made a *man of strife*; expect that, saith God, *they shall fight against thee*; they will still continue their opposition, *but they shall not prevail against thee*, to drive thee off from thy work, or to cut thee off from the land of the living.

4. He shall have God for his protector and mighty deliverer; *I am with thee to save thee.* Those that have God with them, have a saviour with them, who hath wisdom and strength enough to deal with the most formidable enemy; and those that are *with God*, and faithful to him, he will *deliver them*, ver. 21. either from trouble or through it. They may perhaps fall *into the hand of the wicked*, and they may appear *terrible* to them, but God will rescue them *out of their hands.* They shall not be able to kill them, till they have finished their testimony; they shall not prevent their happiness. God will so *deliver them*, as to *preserve them to his heavenly kingdom*, 2 Tim. iv. 18. and that is deliverance enough. There are many things that appear very *frightful*, that yet do not prove at all *hurtful* to a good man.

CHAP. XVI.

In this chapter, (1.) *The greatness of the calamity that was coming upon the Jewish nation, is illustrated by prohibitions given to the prophet, neither to set up a house of his own,* ver. 1—4. *nor to go into the house of mourning,* ver. 5—7. *nor into the house of feasting,* ver. 8, 9. (2.) *God is justified in these severe proceedings against them, by an account of their great wickedness,* ver, 10—13. (3.) *An intimation is given of mercy in reserve,* ver. 14, 15. (4.) *Some hopes are given that the punishment of the sin should prove the reformation of the sinners, and that they should return to God at length in a way of duty, and so be qualified for his returns to them in a way of favour,* ver. 14—21.

1. THE word of the LORD came also unto me, saying, 2. Thou shalt not take thee a wife, neither shalt thou have sons nor daughters in this place. 3. For thus saith the LORD concerning the sons, and concerning the daughters *that are* born in this place, and concerning their mothers that bare them, and concerning their fathers that begat them in this land. 4. They shall die of grievous deaths, they shall not be lamented, neither shall they be buried: *but* they shall be as dung upon the face of the earth, and they shall be consumed by the sword, and by famine, and their carcases shall be meat for the fowls of heaven, and for the beasts of the earth. 5. For thus saith the LORD, Enter not into the house of mourning, neither go to lament, nor bemone them: for I have taken away my peace from this people, saith the LORD, *even* loving kindness and mercies. 6. Both the great and the small shall die in this land: they shall not be buried, neither shall *men* lament for them, nor cut themselves, nor make themselves bald for them. 7. Neither shall *men* tear *themselves* for them in mourning to comfort them for the dead, neither shall *men* give them the cup of consolation to drink for their father or for their mother. 8. Thou shalt not also go into the house of feasting, to sit with them to eat and to drink. 9. For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I will cause to cease out of this place in your eyes, and in your days, the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride.

The prophet is here for a *sign* to the people; they would not regard what he *said*, let it be tried whether they will regard what he *doth:* In general, he must carry himself so in every thing, as became one that expected to see his country in ruins very shortly. This he foretold, but few regarded the prediction; therefore he is to shew that he is himself fully satisfied in the truth of it: Others go on in their usual course, but he in the prospect of these sad times is forbidden, and therefore forbears marriage, mourning for the dead, and mirth. Note, Those that would convince others of, and affect them with the word of God, must make it appear even in the most self-denying instances, that they do believe it themselves, and are affected with it. Would we rouse others out of their security, and perswade them to sit loose to the world, we must our selves be mortified to present things, and shew that we expect the dissolution of them.

1. Jeremiah must not *marry*, nor think of having a family, and being a house-keeper, *ver.* 2. *Thou shalt not take thee a wife*; nor think of *having sons and daughters in this place*, not in the land of Judah, not in Jerusalem, not in Anathoth. The Jews, more than any people, valued themselves by their early marrying, and their numerous offspring. But Jeremiah must live a bachelor, not so much in *honour* of virginity, as in *diminution* of it; by this it appears that it was *adviseable* and *seasonable* only in calamitous times, and times of *present distress*, 1 Cor. vii. 26. That it is so, is a part of the calamity. There may be a time when it will be said, *blessed is the womb that bare not*, Luke xxiii. 29. And when we see such times at hand, it is wisdom for all, especially for prophets, to keep themselves as much as may be from being *entangled with the affairs of this life*, and encumbred with that which the dearer it is to them, the more it will be the matter of their care, and fear, and grief at such a time. The reason here given, is, because the *fathers* and *mothers*, *the sons and the daughters*, shall *die of grievous deaths*, ver. 3, 4. and those that have wives and children. (1.) They will have such a *clog* upon them, that they cannot *flee* from *those deaths.* A single man may make his escape, and shift for his own safety, when he that has a wife and children, can neither find means to convey them with him, nor find in his heart to go and leave them behind him. (2.) They will be in continual terror for fear of those deaths, and the more they have to lose by them, the greater will the terror and consternation be, when death appears every where in its triumphant pomp and power. (3.) The death of every child, and the aggravating circumstances of it, will be a new death to the parent: Better have no children, than have them brought forth and bred up *for the murtherer*, Hos. ix. 13, 14. than see them live and die in misery. Death is *grievous*, but some deaths are more *grievous* than others, both to them that die, and to their relations that survive them: Hence we read of *so great a death*, 2 Cor. i. 10. Two things are used a little to palliate, and alleviate the terror of death, as to this world; and to sugar the bitter pill; bewailing the dead, and burying them; but to make those deaths grievous indeed, these are denied; *they shall not be lamented*, but shall be carried off, as if all the world were weary of them; nay, they shall *not be buried*, but left exposed, as if they were designed to be monuments of justice. They shall be *as dung* upon the *face of the earth*, not only despicable but detestable, as if they were good for nothing but to muck the ground; and being *consumed* some *by the sword*, and some *by famine*, *their carcases shall be meat for the fowls of heaven, and the beasts of the earth.* Will not any one say, better be without children than live to see them come to this? What reason have we to say, that all is vanity and vexation of spirit, when those creatures that we expect should be our greatest comforts, may prove not only our heaviest cares, but our sorest crosses?

2. Jeremiah must not go to the *house of mourning*, upon occasion of the death of any of his neighbours or relations, *ver.* 5. *Enter thou not into the house of mourning.* It was usual to condole those whose relations were dead, to *bemoan them*, to *cut themselves*, and *make themselves bald*, which it seems was commonly practised, as an expression of mourning, though forbidden by the law, *Deut.* xiv. 1. Nay, sometimes they did in a passion of grief *tear themselves for them*, ver. 6, 7. Partly in honour of the deceased, thus signifying that they thought there was a great loss of them; and partly in compassion to the surviving relations, to whom the burthen will be made the lighter, by their having sharers with them in their grief. They used to *mourn with them*, and so to *comfort them for the dead*, as Job's friends with him, and the Jews with Martha and Mary; and it was a friendly office to give them *a cup of consolation to drink*, to provide cordials for them, and press them earnestly to drink of them, for the support of their spirits; give wine to them that are of heavy heart, *for their father or mother*, that it may be some comfort to them, to find that though they have lost their parents, yet they have some friends left that have a concern for them. Thus the usage stood, and it was a laudable usage; it is a *good work* to others, as well as of *good use* to ourselves to *go to the house of mourning.* It seems the prophet Jeremiah had been wont to abound in good offices of this kind, and it well became his character both as a pious man, and as a prophet; and one would think it should have made him better beloved among his people, than it should seem he was: But now God bids him not lament the death of his friends as usual: For, 1. His sorrow for the destruction of his country in general, must swallow up his sorrow for particular deaths: His tears must now be turned into another chanel, and there is occasion enough for them all. 2. He had little reason to lament those, who died now just before the judgments entred, which he saw at the door; but rather to think them happy, who were seasonably *taken away from the evil to come.* 3. This was to be a type of what was coming, when there should be such an universal confusion, that all neighbourly, friendly, offices should be neglected. Men

men shall be *in deaths so oft*, and even *dying daily*, that they shall have no time, no room, no heart, for the ceremonies that used to attend deaths; the sorrows shall be so ponderous, as not to admit relief; and every one so full of grief for his own troubles, that he shall have no thoughts of his neighbours. All shall be mourners then, and no comforters; every one will find it enough to bear his own burthen; for, *ver.* 5. *I have taken away my peace from this people*; i. e. put a full period to their prosperity, deprived them of health, and wealth, and quiet, and friends, and every thing where-with they might comfort themselves and one another. Whatever peace we enjoy, it is *God's peace*; it is his gift, and *if he give quietness, who then can make trouble?* But if we make not a good use of his peace, he can and will *take it away*, and where are we then? *Job* xxxiv. 29. I will take away my peace, *even my loving-kindnesses and mercies*, these shall be shut up and restrained, which are the fresh springs from which all their fresh streams flow, and then farewel all good. Note, Those have cut themselves off from all true peace, that have thrown themselves out of the favour of God: All is gone, when God takes away from us his *loving-kindness and his mercies*. Then it follows, *ver.* 6. *Both the great and the small shall die*, even *in this land*, the land of Canaan, that used to be called the *land of the living*. God's favour is our life, take away that, and *we die*, *we perish*, *we all perish*.

3. Jeremiah must not go to the *house of mirth*, no more than to the *house of mourning*, ver. 8. It had been his custom, and it was innocent enough, when any of his friends made entertainments at their houses, and invited him to them, to *go and sit with them*, not meerly *to drink*, but *to eat and to drink*, soberly and chearfully. But now he must not take that liberty, (1.) Because it was *unseasonable*, and disagreeable to the providences of God that were concerning the land and nation, God called loud to *weeping*, *and mourning*, *and fasting*; he was coming forth against them in his judgments, and it was time for them to *humble themselves:* And it well became the prophet who gave them the warning, to give them an example of taking the warning, and complying with it; and so to make it appear, he did himself *believe* it. Ministers ought to be examples of self-denial, and mortification, and to shew themselves affected with those terrors of the Lord with which they desire to affect others. And it becomes all the sons of Zion, to sympathize with her in her afflictions, and not to be merry when she is perplexed, *Amos* vi. 6. (2.) Because he must thus shew the people, what sad times were coming upon them. His friends wondered he would not meet them, as he used to do in the house of feasting: But he lets them know, it was to intimate to them, that all their feasting would be at an end shortly, *ver.* 9. *I will cause to cease the voice of mirth.* You shall have nothing to feast on, nothing to rejoice in, but be surrounded with calamities that shall mar your mirth, and cast a damp upon it, God can find ways to tame the most jovial. This shall be done *in this place*, in Jerusalem that used to be the *joyous city*, and thought her joys were all secure to her; it shall be done in *your eyes*, in *your sight*, to be a vexation to you, who now look so haughty, look so merry; it shall be done in *your days*, you yourselves shall live to see it. The *voice of praise* they had made to cease by their iniquities and idolatries, and therefore justly God made to cease among them, the *voice of mirth and gladness*. The voice of God's prophets was not heard, was not heeded among them, and therefore no longer shall the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride, of the songs that used to grace the nuptials be heard among them. See *chap.* vii. 34.

10. ¶ And it shall come to pass when thou shalt shew this people all these words, and they shall say unto thee, Wherefore hath the LORD pronounced all this great evil against us? or what *is* our iniquity? or what *is* our sin that we have committed against the LORD our God? 11. Then shalt thou say unto them, Because your fathers have forsaken me, saith the LORD, and have walked after other gods, and have served them, and have worshipped them, and have forsaken me, and have not kept my law: 12. And ye have done worse than your fathers, (for behold, ye walk every one after the imagination of his evil heart, that they may not hearken unto me) 13. Therefore will I cast you out of this land, into a land that ye know not, *neither* ye nor your fathers, and there shall ye serve other gods day and night, where I will not shew you favour.

Here is, 1. An enquiry made into the reasons, why God would bring those judgments upon them, *ver.* 10. *When thou shalt shew this people all these words*, the words of this curse, they will say unto thee, *wherefore has the Lord pronounced all this great evil against us?* One would hope there were some among them that asked this question with a humble penitent heart, desiring to know what was the sin for which God contended with them, that they might *cast it away*, and prevent the judgment; shew us the Jonah that raiseth the storm, and we will throw it over-board: But it seems here to be the language of those who quarrelled at the word of God, and challenged him to shew what they had done, which might deserve so severe a punishment. *What is our iniquity?* And *what is our sin?* What crime have we ever been guilty of proportionable to such a sentence? Instead of humbling and condemning themselves, they stand upon their own justification; and insinuate, that God did them wrong in pronouncing this evil against them, and that he *laid upon them more than was right*, and they had reason to *enter into judgment with God*, Job xxxiv. 23. Note, It is amazing to see how hardly sinners are brought to justify God, and judge themselves when they are in trouble, and to own the iniquity and the sin that has procured them the trouble.

2. A plain and full answer given to this enquiry. Do they ask the prophet, why, and for what reason God is thus angry with them? He shall not stop their mouths by telling them, they may be sure there is a sufficient reason, the righteous God is never *angry without cause*, without good cause: But he must tell them particularly what is the cause, that they may be convinced and humbled, or at least that God may be *justified*. Let them know then,

1. That God visited upon them the *iniquities of their fathers*; ver. 11. *Your fathers have forsaken me, and have not kept my law*; they shook off divine institutions and grew weary of them, they thought them too plain, too mean, and then they *walked after other gods*, whose worship was more gay, and pompous; and being fond of variety and novelty they *served them*, and *worshipped them*; and this was the sin which God had said in the second commandment he would *visit upon their children*, who kept up these idolatrous usages, because they received them *by tradition from their fathers*, 1 Pet. i. 18.

2. That God reckoned with them for their own iniquities, *ver.* 12. You have made your fathers sin your own, and are become obnoxious to the punishment which in their days was deferred, for *you have done worse than your fathers*. If they had made a good use of their fathers reprieve, and had been led by the patience of God to repentance, they should have fared the better for it, and the judgment should have been prevented, the reprieve turned into a national pardon; but making an ill use of it, and being hardened by it in their sins, they fared the worse for it, and the reprieve being expired, an addition was made to the sentence, and it was executed with the more severity. They were more impudent and obstinate in sin than their fathers, *walked every one after the imagination of his heart*, made that their guide and rule, and were resolved to follow that, on purpose *that they might not hearken to God*, and his prophets. They designedly suffer their own lusts and passions to be noisy, that they might drown the voice of their consciences. No wonder then, that God has taken up this resolution concerning them, *ver.* 13. *I will cast you out of this land*, this land of light, this valley of vision, since you will not *hearken to me* you shall not *hear me*, you shall be hurried away, not into a neighbouring country which you have formerly had some acquaintance and correspondence with, but into a far country, *a land that ye know not, neither you nor your fathers*; in which you have no interest, nor can expect to meet with any comfortable society, to be an allay to your misery. Justly were they banished into a *strange land* who doted upon *strange gods*, which neither *they nor their fathers knew*, Deut. xxxii. 17. Two things would make their case there very miserable, and both of them relate to the soul, the better part; the greatest calamities of their captivity were those which affected that, and debarred that from its bliss. (1.) It is the happiness of the soul to be employed in the service of God, but *there shall ye serve other Gods day and night*, i. e. you shall be in continual temptation to serve them, and perhaps compelled to do it by your cruel task-masters; and when you are forced to worship idols you will be as *sick* of it, as ever you were *fond* of it, when it was *forbidden* you by your godly kings. See how God often makes mens sin their punishment, and *fills the backslider in heart with his own ways*. You shall have no publick worship at all, but the worship of idols, and then you will think with regret how you slighted the worship of the true God. (2.) It is the happiness of the soul to have some tokens of the loving-kindness of God, but you shall go to a strange land, *where I will not shew you favour*. If they had had God's favour, that would have made even the land of their captivity a pleasant land; but if they lie under his wrath, the yoke of their oppression will be intolerable to them.

14. ¶ Therefore behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that it shall no more be said, The LORD liveth that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; 15. But, The LORD liveth that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither he had driven them: and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers. 16. ¶ Behold, I will send for many fishers, saith the LORD, and they shall fish them; and after will I send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of

the rocks. 17. For mine eyes *are* upon all their ways: they are not hid from my face, neither is their iniquity hid from mine eyes. 18. And first I will recompense their iniquity, and their sin double; because they have defiled my land, they have filled mine inheritance with the carcases of their detestable and abominable things. 19. O LORD, my strength and my fortress, and my refuge in the day of affliction, the Gentiles shall come unto thee from the ends of the earth, and shall say, Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and *things* wherein *there is* no profit. 20. Shall a man make gods unto himself, and they *are* no gods? 21. Therefore behold, I will this once cause them to know, I will cause them to know mine hand, and my might, and they shall know that my name *is* the LORD.

There is a mixture of *mercy* and *judgment* in these verses, and it is hard to know to which to apply some of the passages here, they are so interwoven; and some seem to look as far forward as the times of the gospel.

1. God will certainly execute judgment upon them for their idolatries: Let them expect it, for the decree is gone forth.

(1.) God sees all their sins, tho' they commit them never so secretly, and palliate them never so artfully, *ver.* 17. *Mine eyes are upon all their ways.* They have not their eye upon God, have no regard to him, stand in no awe of him, but he has his eye upon them, neither they nor their sins are *hid from his face, from his eyes.* Note, None of the sins of sinners either can be *concealed* from God, or shall be *over-looked* by him, *Prov.* v. 21. *Job* xxxiv. 21. *Psalm* xc. 8.

(2.) God is highly displeased, particularly at their idolatries, *ver.* 18. As his omniscience convicts them, so his justice condemns them, *I will recompense their iniquitity and their sin double*; not double to what it deserves, but double to what they expect, and to what I have done formerly. Or, I will recompense it *abundantly*, they shall now pay for their long reprieve, and the divine patience they have abused. The sin for which God has a controversy with them, is their having *defiled God's land* with their idolatries, and not only alienated that which he was *intitled* to as his inheritance, but polluted that which he dwelt in with delight as *his inheritance*, and made it offensive to him, *with the carcases of their detestable things*, i. e. the gods themselves which they worshipped, the images of which, tho' they were of gold and silver, were as loathsome to God, as the stinking carcases of men or beasts are to us; idols are *carcases of detestable things*, God hates them, and so should we. Or, the sacrifices which they offered to these idols, with which *the land was filled*; for they had *high places* in all the coasts and corners of it. This was the sin which above any other incensed God against them.

(3.) He will find out and raise up instruments of his wrath, that shall *cast them out of their land*, according to the sentence passed upon them, *ver.* 16. *I will send for many fishers, and many hunters.* The Chaldean army, that shall have many ways of ensnaring and destroying them, by *fraud* as fishers, by *force* as hunters, they shall find them out wherever they are, and shall chase and closely pursue them to their ruin; shall *discover* them wherever they are hid in *hills* or *mountains*, or *holes of the rocks*, and shall drive them out. God has various ways of prosecuting a people with his judgments, that avoid the convictions of his word: He has men at command fit for his purpose, he has them within call, and can *send for them* when he pleaseth.

(4.) Their bondage in Babylon shall be sorer and much more grievous than that in Egypt, their task-masters more cruel, and their lives made more bitter. This is implied in the promise, *ver.* 14, 15. That their deliverance out of Babylon, shall be more illustrious in itself, and more welcome to them, than that out of Egypt. Their slavery in Egypt came upon them gradually, and almost insensibly, that in Babylon came upon them at once, and with all the aggravating circumstances of terror. In Egypt they had a Goshen of their own, but none such in Babylon. In Egypt they were used as servants, that were useful. In Babylon, as captives that had been hateful.

(5.) They shall be warned, and God shall be glorified by these judgments brought upon them. These judgments have a voice and speak aloud, (1.) *Instruction to them*, when God *chastens* them, he *teaches* them. By this rod God expostulates with them, *ver.* 20. *Shall a man make gods to himself?* Will any man be so perfectly void of all reason and consideration, as to think that a god of his own making can stand him in any stead. Will you ever again be such fools as you have been, to make to yourselves gods, which *are no gods*, when you have a God whom you may call *your own*, who made you, and is himself, the true and living God. (2.) *Honour to God*, for he will be known by the judgments which he executeth: He will *first* recompense their iniquity, *ver.* 18. and then he will *this once*, ver. 21. This *once for* all, not by many interruptions of their peace, but this one desolation and destruction of it. Or, *this once* and no more, *I will cause them to know my hand*, the length and weight of my punishing hand, how far it can reach, and how deep it can wound. And *they shall know that my name is Jehovah*, a God with whom there is no contending, that gives being to threatnings, and puts life into them as well as promises.

2. Yet he hath mercy in store for them, intimations of which come in here for the encouragement of the prophet himself, and of those few among them that *trembled at God's word.* It was said with an air of severity, *ver.* 13. that God would banish them into a strange land, but that thereby they might not be driven to despair, presently there follow words of comfort.

1. *The days will come*, the joyful days, when the same hand that *dispersed* them shall *gather them* again; ver. 14, 15. They are *cast out*, but they are not *cast off*, they are not *cast away*; they shall be brought up *from the land of the north*, the land of their captivity, where they are held with a strong hand, and from *all the lands whither they are driven*, and seemed to be lost and buried in the crowd. Nay, *I will bring them again into their own land*, and settle them there, as the foregoing threatnings agreed with what was written in the law, so doth this promise, *Lev.* xxvi. 44. *Yet will I not cast them away.* Deut. xxx. 4. *Thence will the Lord thy God gather thee.* And the following words, *ver.* 16. may be understood as a promise, God will send for *fishers* and *hunters*, the Medes and Persians that shall find them out in the countries where they are scattered, and send them back to their own land; or, Zerubbabel and others of their own nation who should *fish* them out, and *hunt* after them to persuade them to return; or whatever instruments the Spirit of God made use of to *stir up their spirits to go up*, which at first they were backward to. They began to nestle in Babylon, but *as an eagle stirs up her nest, and flutters over her young*, so God did by them, *Zech.* ii. 7.

2. Their deliverance out of Babylon should upon some accounts be more illustrious and memorable, than their deliverance out of Egypt was. Both were the Lord's doing and marvellous in their eyes, both were proofs that *the Lord liveth*, and were to be kept in everlasting remembrance to his honour, as the *living God*, but the fresh mercy shall be so surprizing, so welcome, that it shall even abolish the memory of the former. Not but that *new* mercies should put us in mind of *old* ones, and give us occasion to renew our thanksgivings for them, yet because we are tempted to think, that the former days were better than these, and to ask, *Where are all the wonders that our fathers told us of?* as if God's *arm* were *waxen short*, and to cry up the *age of miracles* above the later ages, when mercies are wrought in a way of common providence, therefore we are allowed here *comparatively* to forget the bringing of Israel out of Egypt, as a deliverance out-done by that out of Babylon. That was done *by might and power*, this *by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts*, Zech. iv. 6. In this there was more of *pardoning mercy* appearing than that, which is the most *glorious branch* of divine mercy; for their captivity in Babylon had more in it of the punishment of sin, than their bondage in Egypt; and therefore that which comforts Zion in her deliverance out of Babylon is this, that *her iniquity is pardoned*, Isa. xl. 2. Note, God glorifies himself, and we must glorify him in those *mercies* that have no *miracles* in them, as well as in those that have. And tho' the favours of God to our fathers must not be forgotten, yet those to ourselves in our own day, we must especially give thanks for.

3. Their deliverance out of captivity shall be accompanied with a blessed reformation, and they shall return effectually cured of their inclination to idolatry, which will *compleat* their deliverance, and make it a mercy indeed. They had defiled their own land with their *detestable things*, ver. 18. But when they have smarted for so doing, they shall come and humble themselves before God, *ver.* 19, 20, 21.

(1.) They shall be brought to acknowledge that their God only is *God indeed*, for he is a *God at need. My strength* to support and comfort me, *my fortress* to protect and shelter me, and *my refuge* to whom I may flee *in the day of affliction.* Note, Need drives many to God, who had set themselves at a distance from him. Those that slighted him in the day of their prosperity, will be glad to flee to him in the day of their affliction.

(2.) They shall be quickned to return to him by the conversion of the Gentiles; *the Gentiles shall come to thee from the ends of the earth*, and therefore shall not we come? Or, the Jews who had by their idolatries made themselves as Gentiles (so I rather understand it) shall *come to thee*, by repentance and reformation, shall return to their duty and allegiance, even *from the ends of the earth*, from all the countries whither they were driven. The prophet comforts himself with the hope of this, and in a transport of joy, returns to God the notice he had given him of it, *O Lord, my strength and my fortress*, I am now easy, since thou hast given

given me a prospect of multitudes that shall *come to thee from the ends of the earth*, both of Jewish converts, and of Gentile proselytes. Note, Those that are brought to God themselves, cannot but rejoice greatly to see others coming to him, coming back to him.

(3.) They shall acknowledge the folly of their ancestors, which it becomes them to do, when they were smarting for the sins of their ancestors. *Surely our fathers have inherited* not the satisfaction they promised themselves and their children, but *lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit*; we are now sensible, that our fathers were cheated in their idolatrous worship, it did not *prove* what it *promised*, and therefore, what have we to do any more with it? Note, It were well if the disappointment which some have met with in the service of sin, and the pernicious consequences of it to them, might prevail to deter others from treading in their steps.

(4.) They shall *reason* themselves out of their idolatry, and that reformation is likely to be sincere and durable, which results from a rational conviction of the gross absurdity there is in sin. They shall argue thus with themselves, (and it is well argued) *ver.* 20. *Should a man* be such a fool, be so perfectly void of the reason of a man as to *make gods to himself*, the creatures of his own fancy, the work of his own hands, when they are really *no gods?* Can a man be so besotted, so perfectly lost to human understanding, as to expect any divine blessing or favour from that which pretends to no divinity, but what it first received from him?

(5.) They shall herein give honour to God, and make it to appear, that they know both *his hand* in his providence, and *his name* in his word, and they are brought to know *his name*, by what they are made to know of *his hand*, ver. 21. *This once*, now at length they shall be made to know that which they would not be brought to *know*, by all the pains the prophets took with them. Note, So stupid are we, that nothing less than the *mighty* hand of divine grace *known* experimentally, can make us know right the name of God, as it is revealed to us.

4. Their deliverance out of captivity shall be a type and figure of the great salvation to be wrought out by the Messiah, who shall *gather together in one, the children of God that were scattered abroad.* And this is that which so far out-shines the deliverance out of *Egypt*, as even to eclipse the lustre of it, and make it even to be forgotten. To this some apply that of the *many fishers* and *hunters*, the preachers of the gospel, who were *fishers of men*, to enclose souls with the gospel net; to find them out *in every mountain* and *hill*, and secure them for Christ. Then the *Gentiles came to God*, some *from the ends of the earth*, and turned to the worship of him from the service of dumb idols.

CHAP. XVII.

In this chapter, (1.) *God convicts the Jews of the sin of idolatry, by the notorious evidence of the fact, and condemns them to captivity for it,* ver. 1—4. (2.) *He shews them the folly of all their carnal confidences, which should stand them in no stead, when God's time was to contend with them, and that this was one of the sins upon which his controversy with them was grounded,* ver. 5—11. (3.) *The prophet makes his appeal and address to God, upon occasion of the malice of his enemies against them, committing himself to the divine protection, and begging of God to appear for him,* ver. 12—18. (4.) *God by the prophet warns the people to keep holy the sabbath day, assuring them that if they did, it should be the lengthning out of their tranquillity; but if not, God would by some desolating judgment, assert the honour of his sabbaths,* ver. 19—27.

1. THE sin of Judah *is* written with a pen of iron, *and* with the point of a diamond; *it is* graven upon the table of their heart, and upon the horns of your altars: 2. Whilst their children remember their altars and their groves by the green trees upon the high hills. 3. O my mountain in the field, I will give thy substance, *and* all thy treasures to the spoil, *and* thy high places for sin, throughout all thy borders. 4. And thou, even thy self shalt discontinue from thine heritage that I gave thee, and I will cause thee to serve thine enemies in the land which thou knowest not: for ye have kindled a fire in mine anger, *which* shall burn for ever.

The people had asked, *chap.* xvi. 10. *What is our iniquity, and what is our sin?* As if they could not be charged with any thing worth speaking of, for which God should enter into judgment with them; their challenge was answered there, but here we have a further reply to it; in which,

1. The indictment is fully proved upon the prisoners, both the fact, and the fault; their sin is too plain to be denied, and too bad to be excused, and they have nothing to plead either in extenuation of the crime, or in arrest and mitigation of the judgment.

(1.) They cannot plead *not guilty*, for their sins are upon record in the book of God's omniscience, and their own conscience; nay, and they are obvious to the eye and observation of the world, *ver.* 1, 2. It is *written* before God in the most legible and indelible characters, and *sealed among his treasures*, never to be forgotten, *Deut.* xxxii. 34. It is written there with *a pen of iron*, and *with the point of a diamond*; what is so written will not be worn out by time, but is, as Job speaks, *graven in the rock for ever.* Note, The sin of sinners is never *forgotten*, till it is *forgiven.* It is *ever before God*, till by repentance it comes to be *ever before us.* It is *graven upon the table of their heart*, their own consciences witness against them, and are instead of a thousand witnesses. What is *graven on the heart*, though it may be covered and closed up for a time, yet being *graven*, it cannot be razed out, but will be produced in evidence, when the books shall be opened. Nay, we need not appeal to the *tables of the heart*, perhaps they will not own the convictions of their consciences. We need go no further for proof of the charge, than the *horns of their altars*, on which the blood of their idolatrous sacrifices was sprinkled, and perhaps the names of the idols, to whose honour they were erected, were *inscribed.* Their neighbours will witness against them, and all the creatures they have abused, by using them in the service of their lusts. To compleat the evidence, their own children shall be witnesses against them; they will *tell truth*, when their fathers dissemble and prevaricate; they remember *the altars* and *the groves* to which their parents took them when they were little, *ver.* 2. It appears they were full of them, and acquainted with them betimes, they talk of them so frequently, so familiarly, and with so much delight.

(2.) They cannot plead that they *repent*, or are come to a *better mind*; no, as the guilt of their sin is *undeniable*, so their inclination to sin is *invincible*, and *incurable.* In this sense many understand, *ver.* 1, 2. Their sin is deeply engraven as with *a pen of iron in the tables of their hearts*, they have a rooted affection to it, it is woven into their very nature; their sin is dear to them, as that is of which we say, it is *engraven on our hearts.* The bias of their minds is still as strong as ever towards their idols, and they are not wrought upon either by the word or rod of God to forget them, and abate their affection to them. It is *written upon the horns of their altars*, for they have given up their names to their idols, and resolve to abide by what they have done; they have bound themselves as with cords, to the horns of their altars. And, *ver.* 2. may be read fully to this sense, *As they remember their children, so remember they their altars and their groves*, they are as fond of them, and take as much pleasure in them as men do in their own children, and are as loth to part with them; they will live and die with their idols, and can no more forget them, than *a woman* can *forget her sucking child.*

2. The indictment being thus fully proved, the judgment is affirmed, and the sentence ratified, *ver.* 3, 4. forasmuch as they are thus wedded to their sins, and will not *part with them.*

1. They shall be made to part with *their treasures*, and those shall be given into the hands of strangers; Jerusalem is *God's mountain in the field*, it was built on a hill in the midst of a plain; all the treasures of that wealthy city will God *give to the spoil.* Or, *My mountains with the fields, thy wealth and all thy treasures will I expose to spoil*; both the products of the country, and the stores of the city shall be seized by the Chaldeans. Justly are men stripped of that which they have served their idols with, and have made the food and fuel of their lusts. *My mountain* (so the whole land was, *Psalm* lxxviii. 54. *Deut.* xi. 11.) you have turned into *your high places for sin*, have worshipped your idols upon *the high hills*, ver. 2. and now they shall be *given for a spoil in all your borders.* What we make *for a sin*, God will make *for a spoil*; for what comfort can we expect in that wherewith God is *dishonoured?*

2. They shall be made to part with *their inheritance*, with their real estates as well as personal, and shall be carried captives into a strange land, *ver.* 4. *Thou, even thy self*, or, *thou thy self, and those that are in thee*, all the inhabitants *shall discontinue from thy heritage that I gave thee.* God owns it was *their heritage*, and *he gave* it them, they had an unquestionable title to it, which was an aggravation of their folly in throwing themselves out of the possession of it. It is *through thy self*, (so some read it) through thine own default that thou art disseized. *Thou shalt discontinue*, or *intermit* the *occupation* of thy land. The law appointed them to *let their land rest* (it is the word here used) one year in seven, *Exod.* xxiii. 11. They did not observe that law, and now God would compel them to *let it rest:* the land shall *enjoy her sabbaths*, Lev. xxvi. 34. and yet it shall be no rest to them, they shall *serve their enemies in a land they know not.* Observe, (1.) Sin works a discontinuance of our comforts, and deprives us of the *enjoyment* of that which God has given us. Yet, (2.) A discontinuance of the possession is not a defeasance of the right, but it is intimated, that upon their repentance they shall recover possession again. For the present, *ye have kindled a fire in mine anger*, which burns so hot, that it seems as if it would burn *for ever*; and

and so it will unless you repent, for it is the anger of an *everlasting* God, fastning upon *immortal* souls; and *who knows the power of that anger?*

5. ¶ Thus saith the LORD, Cursed *be* the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD. 6. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh, but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, *in* a salt land, and not inhabited. 7. Blessed *is* the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is. 8. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and *that* spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green, and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit. 9. ¶ The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked, who can know it? 10. I the LORD search the heart, *I* try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, *and* according to the fruit of his doings. 11. *As* the partridge sitteth *on eggs*, and hatcheth *them* not: *so* he that getteth riches and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool.

It is excellent doctrine that is preached in these verses, and of general concern and use to us all, and it doth not appear to have any particular reference to the present state of Judah and Jerusalem; the prophet's sermons were not all *prophetical*, but some of them *practical*; yet this discourse which probably we have here only the heads of, would be of singular use to them by way of caution, not to misplace their confidence in the day of their distress. Let us all learn what we are taught here,

1. Concerning the disappointment and vexation they will certainly meet with, that depend upon creatures for success and relief when they are in trouble, *ver.* 5, 6. *Cursed be the man that trusteth in man*, God pronounceth him cursed for the affront he thereby puts upon him; or, *cursed*, that is, miserable *is the man* that doth so, for he leans upon a broken reed, which will not only fail him, but will *run into his hand and pierce it.* Observe, (1.) The sin here condemned, it is *trusting in man*; putting that confidence in the wisdom and power, the kindness and faithfulness of men, which should be placed in those attributes of God only. Making our applications to men, and raising our expectations from them as principal agents, whereas they are but instruments in the hand of providence: It is *making* flesh *the arm* we stay upon, the arm we work with, and with which we hope to work our point; the arm under which we shelter our selves, and on which we depend for protection. God is his peoples *arm*, Isa. xxxiii. 2. We must not think to make any creature to be that to us, which God has undertaken to be. Man is called *flesh*, to shew the folly of those that make them their confidence; he is *flesh*, i. e. weak and feeble, as *flesh* without bones or sinews, that has no strength at all in it; he is unactive as *flesh* without spirit, which is a dead thing. He is mortal and dying, as flesh which soon putrefies and corrupts, and is continually wasting. Nay, he is false and sinful, and has lost his integrity, so his being flesh signifies, *Gen.* vi. 3. (2.) The great malignity there is in this sin; it is the *departure* of *the evil heart of unbelief from the living God.* They that trust in man, perhaps draw nigh to God with their mouth, and honour him with their lips, they call him their hope, and say they trust in him; but really *their heart departeth from him*; they distrust him, despise him, and decline a correspondence with him. Cleaving to the cistern, is leaving the fountain, and is resented accordingly. (3.) The fatal consequences of this sin. He that puts a confidence in man, puts a cheat upon himself; for, *ver.* 6. *He shall be like the heath in the desert*, a sorry shrub, the product of barren ground, sapless, and useless, and worthless; his comforts shall all fail him, and his hopes be blasted: he shall wither, be dejected in himself, and trampled on by all about him. *When good comes* he *shall not see* it, he shall not share in it; when the times mend, they shall not mend with him, but he shall *inhabit the parched places in the wilderness*, i. e. his expectations shall be continually frustrated; when others have a harvest, he shall have none. They that trust to their own *righteousness* and *strength*, and think they can do well enough without the merit and grace of Christ, thus *make flesh their arm*, and their souls cannot prosper in graces or comforts; they can neither *produce the fruits* of acceptable services to God, nor *reap the fruits* of saving blessings from him; they *dwell in a dry land.*

2. Concerning the abundant satisfaction which they have and will have, that make God their confidence, that live by faith in his providence and promise, that *refer themselves* to him and his conduct at all times, and *repose themselves* in him and his love in the most unquiet times, *ver.* 7, 8. Observe, (1.) The duty required of us, to *trust in the Lord*, to do our duty to him, and then depend upon him to bear us out in doing it; when creatures and second causes either deceive or threaten us, either are false to us or fierce against us, to commit our selves to God as all sufficient, both to make up the want of those that fail us, and to protect us from those that set upon us. It is to *make the Lord our hope*, his favour the good we *hope for*, and his power the strength we *hope in.* (2.) The comfort that attends the doing of this duty. He that doth so shall be *as a tree planted by the waters*, a choice tree, about which great care has been taken to set it in the best soil, so far from being like *the heath in the wilderness*; like a tree that *spreads out her roots*, and thereby is firmly fixed, spreads them out *by the rivers*, whence it draws abundance of sap; which notes both the establishment and the comfort which they have that make God their hope; they are easy, they are pleasant, and enjoy a continual security and serenity of mind; a tree thus planted, thus watered, shall *not see when heat comes*, i. e. shall not sustain any damage by the most scorching heats of summer; it is so well moistned from its roots, that it shall be sufficiently guarded against drought. Those that make God their hope, (1.) They shall *flourish* in credit and comfort; like a tree that is *always green*, whose *leaf* doth not wither; they shall be *chearful* to themselves, and *beautiful* in the eyes of others. Those who thus *give honour* to God by *giving him credit*, God will *put honour* upon them, and make them the ornament and delight of the places where they live, as green trees are. (2.) They shall be *fixed* in an inward peace and satisfaction; *shall not be careful in a year of drought*, when there is want of rain, for as it has *seed in it self*, so it has *its moisture.* Those that make God *their hope*, have enough in him to make up the want of all creature-comforts. We need not be *sollicitous* about the breaking of a cistern, as long as we have the fountain. (3.) They shall be fruitful in holiness, and in all good works. They that trust in God, and by faith derive strength and grace from him, *shall not cease from yielding fruit*, they shall still be enabled to do that which will redound to the glory of God, the benefit of others, and their own account.

3. Concerning the sinfulness of man's heart, and the divine inspection it is always under, *ver.* 9, 10. It is folly to trust in man, for he is not only frail, but false and deceitful. We are apt to think we trust in God, and are intitled to the blessings here promised to them that do so. But this is a thing about which our own hearts deceive us as much as any thing; we think we trust in God when really we do not, as appears by this that our hopes and fears *rise* or *fall*, according as second causes *smile* or *frown.* But it is true in general,

(1.) There is that wickedness in our hearts, which we our selves are not aware of, and do not suspect to be there; nay, it is a common mistake among the children of men to think themselves, their own hearts at least, a great deal better than really they are. *The heart*, i. e. the conscience of man, in his corrupt and fallen state, *is deceitful above all things*, it is subtle and false, it is apt to *supplant*, so the word properly signifies, it is that from which Jacob had his name a *supplanter.* It calls evil good, and good evil; puts false colours upon things, and cries peace to those to whom peace doth not belong. When men say in their hearts, *i. e.* suffer their hearts to whisper to them, that either there is no God, or he doth not see, or he will not require, or they shall have peace, though they go on; in these and a thousand the like suggestions, the heart is *deceitful:* it cheats men into their own ruin; and this will be the aggravation of it, that they are self-deceivers, self-destroyers. Herein the heart is *desperately wicked*; it is *deadly*, it is *desperate.* The case is bad indeed, and in a manner deplorable, and past relief, if the conscience, which should rectify the errors of the other faculties, is it self a mother of falshood, and a ring-leader in the delusion. What will become of a man, if that in him which should be the *candle of the Lord* give a false light, if God's deputy in the soul, that is intrusted to support his interests, betrays them? Such is the deceitfulness of the heart, that we may truly say, *Who can know it?* Who can describe how bad the heart is? We cannot know our own hearts, not what they will do in an hour of temptation; Hezekiah did not, Peter did not; not what corrupt dispositions there are in them, nor in how many things they have turned aside; who can understand his errors? Much less can we know the hearts of others, or have any dependance upon them. But,

(2.) Whatever wickedness there is in the heart, God sees it, and knows it, is perfectly acquainted with it, and apprized of it; *I the Lord search the heart.* This is true of *all* that is in the heart, all the *thoughts* of it, the *quickest*, and those that are most carelessly overlooked by our selves; all the *intents* of it, the *closest*, and those that are most artfully disguised, and industriously concealed from others. Men may be imposed upon, but God cannot. He not only *searcheth the heart* with a piercing eye, but he *tries the reins*, to pass a judgment upon what he discovers, to give every thing its true character and due weight. He tries as the gold is tried, whether it be standard or no; as the prisoner is tried, whether he be guilty or no. And this judgment he makes of the heart, is in order to his passing judgment

judgment upon the man; it is *to give to every man according to his ways*, according to the *desert* and the *tendency* of them; life to those that walked in the ways of life, and death to those that persisted in *the paths of the destroyer*; and *according to the fruit of his doings*, the effect and influence his doings have had upon others; or, according to what is settled by the word of God to be the fruit of mens doings, blessings to the obedient, and curses to the disobedient. Note, Therefore God is *judge himself*, and he *alone*, because he, and none but he, knows the hearts of the children of men. It is true especially of all the *deceitfulness* and *wickedness* of the heart, all its corrupt devices, desires, and designs, God observes and discerns them; and (which is more than any man can do) he judgeth of the overt act by the heart. Note, God knows more evil by us than we do by our selves; which is a good reason why we should not flatter our selves, but always stand in awe of the judgment of God.

4. Concerning the curse that attends wealth unjustly gotten: fraud and violence had been reigning crying sins in Judah and Jerusalem; now the prophet would have those who had been guilty of these sins, and were now stripped of all they had, to read their sin in their punishment, *ver.* 11. *He that gets riches, and not by right*, though he may make them his hope, he shall never have joy of them. Observe, It is possible that those who use unlawful means to get wealth, may succeed therein, and prosper for a time, and it is a temptation to many to defraud and oppress their neighbours, when there is money to be got by it. He that has got *treasures* by *vanity* and a *lying tongue*, may hug himself in his success, and say, *I am rich*; nay, and I am innocent too, *Hos.* xii. 8. but *he shall leave them in the midst of his days*; they shall be taken from him, or he from them; God shall cut him off with some surprizing stroke then, when he said, *Soul, take thine ease, thou hast goods laid up for many years*, Luke xii. 19, 20. He shall *leave them* to he knows not whom, and not be able to take any of his riches away with him. It intimates, what a great vexation it is to a worldly man at death, that he must leave his riches behind him; and *justly* may it be a terror to those, that got them *unjustly*; for though the wealth will not follow them to another world, the guilt will, and the torment of an everlasting *Son, remember*, Luke xvi. 25. Thus *at his end he shall be a fool*, a Nabal, whose wealth did him no good, which he had so sordidly hoarded, when *his heart* became *dead as a stone*. He was a fool all along; sometimes perhaps his own conscience told him so, but *at his end* he will appear to be so. Those are fools indeed, that are fools in *their latter end*; and so multitudes will prove, who were cried up as *wise men*, that did *well for themselves*, Psal. xlix. 13, 18. They that get grace, will be wise *in their latter end*, will have the comfort of it in death, and the benefit of it to eternity, *Prov.* xix 20. but they that place their happiness in the wealth of the world, and right or wrong *will be rich*, will rue the folly of it, when it is too late to rectify the fatal mistake. This is like *the partridge that sits on eggs, and hatcheth them not*; but either they are broke, as *Job* xxxix. 15. or stolen, as *Isa.* x. 14. or they become addle; some sort of fowl there was well known among the Jews, whose case this commonly was: The rich man takes a great deal of pains to get an estate together, and sits *brooding* upon it, but never has any comfort or satisfaction in it; his projects to enrich himself by sinful courses miscarry, and come to nothing. Let us therefore be *wise in time*; what we get, to get it *honestly*; and what we have, to use it *charitably*; that we may lay up in store a good foundation, and be *wise for eternity*.

12. ¶ A glorious high throne from the beginning, *is* the place of our sanctuary. 13. O LORD, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, *and* they that depart from me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living waters. 14. Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for thou *art* my praise. 15. ¶ Behold, they say unto me, Where *is* the word of the LORD? let it come now. 16. As for me, I have not hastened from *being* a pastor to follow thee, neither have I desired the woful day, thou knowest: that which came out of my lips was *right* before thee. 17. Be not a terror unto me, thou *art* my hope in the day of evil. 18. Let them be confounded that persecute me, but let not me be confounded: let them be dismayed, but let not me be dismayed: bring upon them the day of evil, and destroy them with double destruction.

Here, as often before, we have the prophet retired for private meditation, and *alone with God*. Those ministers that would have comfort in their work, must be much so. In his converse here with God and his own heart, he takes the liberty, which devout souls sometimes use in their soliloquies, to pass from one thing to another, without tying themselves too strictly to the laws of method and coherence.

1. He acknowledgeth the great favour of God to his people in setting up a revealed religion among them, and dignifying them with divine institutions, *ver.* 12. *A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary*: the temple at Jerusalem, where God manifested his special presence, where the lively oracles were lodged, where the people paid their homage to their sovereign, and whither they fled for refuge in distress, was the *place of their sanctuary*. That was a *glorious high throne*, it was a throne of *holiness*, that made it truly *glorious*; it was God's throne, that made it truly *high*. Jerusalem is called the *city of the great King*, not only Israel's King, but the King of the whole earth, so that it might be justly deemed the metropolis, or royal city of the world. It was *from the beginning* so, from the first projecting of it by David, and building of it by Solomon, 2 *Chron.* ii. 9. It was the honour of Israel, that God set up such a glorious throne among them. *As the glorious and high throne*, viz. that is heaven, *is the place of our sanctuary*, so some read it. Note, All good men have a high value and veneration for the ordinances of God, and reckon the *place of the sanctuary a glorious high throne*. Jeremiah mentions this here, either as a plea with God for mercy to their land, in honour of the *throne of his glory*, chap. xiv. 21. or as an aggravation of the sin of his people, in forsaking God, though his throne was among them, and so profaning his crown, and the *place of his sanctuary*.

2. He acknowledgeth the righteousness of God, in abandoning those to ruin that forsook him, and revolted from their allegiance to him, *ver.* 13. He speaks it to God, as subscribing both to the certainty and the equity of it; *O Lord, the hope of* those in Israel that adhere to thee, *all that forsake thee shall be ashamed*. They *must* of necessity be so, for they forsake thee for lying vanities, which will deceive them, and make them ashamed, they *will be ashamed*, for they shame themselves; they will *justly* be put to shame, for they have forsaken him, who alone can keep them in countenance, when troubles come. *Let them be ashamed*, so some read it; and so it is a pious imprecation of the wrath of God upon them, or of petition for his grace, to make them penitently ashamed. *They that depart from me*, i. e. from the word of God which I have preached, they do in effect depart from God; as those that return to God, are said to *return to the prophet*, chap. xv. 19. They that depart *from thee*, so some read it, they shall be *written in the earth*; they shall soon be *blotted out*, as that is which is written in the dust; they shall be trampled upon, and exposed to contempt: they belong to the earth, and shall be numbred among earthly people, that lay up their treasure on earth, and whose names are not *written in heaven*. And they deserve to be thus written with the fools in Israel, that their folly may be made manifest unto all, because they have *forsaken the Lord, the fountain of living waters*, i. e. spring-waters, and that for broken cisterns. Note, God is to all that are his a *fountain of living waters*. There is a *fulness* of comfort in him, an over-flowing, ever-flowing fulness, like that of a fountain; it is always *fresh*, and *clear*, and *clean*, like spring-water, while the pleasures of sin are puddle-waters. They are *free* to it, it is not a *fountain sealed*; they deserve therefore to be condemned as Adam to *red earth*, to which by the corruption of their nature they are *allied*, because they have forsaken the *garden of the Lord*, which is so *well watered*. They that depart from God, are *written in the earth*.

3. He prays to God for *healing saving* mercy for himself. If the case of those be so miserable, that *depart from God*, let me always *draw nigh* to him, *Psal.* lxxiii. 27, 28. and in order to that, Lord, *heal me*, and *save me*, ver. 14. *Heal my backslidings*, my bent to backslide, and *save me* from being carried away by the strength of the stream, to forsake thee. He was *wounded* in spirit with grief upon many accounts; Lord, *heal me* with thy comforts, and make me easy. He was continually exposed to the malice of unreasonable men; Lord, *save me* from them, and let me not fall into their wicked hands. *Heal me*, i. e. sanctify me by thy grace; *save me*, i. e. bring me to thy glory. All that shall be *saved* hereafter, are *sanctified* now; unless the disease of sin be purged out, the soul cannot live. To enforce this petition, he pleads, (1.) The firm belief he had of God's power; *Heal thou me, and then I shall be healed*; the cure will certainly be wrought if thou undertake it; it will be a *thorough cure*, and not a *palliative* one. Those that come to God to be healed, ought to be abundantly satisfied in the all-sufficiency of their physician. *Save me*, and *then I shall* certainly *be saved*, be my dangers and enemies never so threatning. If God *hold us up, we shall live*; if he protect us, we shall be safe. (2.) The sincere regard he had to God's glory, for *thou art my praise*, and for that reason I desire to be healed and saved, *that I may live and praise thee*, Psal. cxix. 175. Thou art he *whom I praise*, and the praise due to thee I never gave to another. Thou art he whom I *glory in*, and *boast of*, for on thee do I depend. Thou art he that furnisheth me with continual matter for praise, and I have given thee the praise of the favours already bestowed upon me. *Thou shalt be my praise*, so some read it; heal me, and save me, and thou shalt have the glory of it: *My praise shall be continually of thee*, Psal. lxxi. 6. — lxxix. 13.

4. He complains of the infidelity and daring impiety of the people to whom he preached. It greatly troubled him, and he ſhews before God this trouble; as the ſervant that had ſlights put upon him by the gueſts he was ſent to invite, *came and ſhewed his Lord theſe things.* He had faithfully delivered God's meſſage to them, and what anſwer has he to return to him that ſent him? Why, *ver.* 15. *Behold they ſay unto me, Where is the word of the Lord? Let it come now,* Iſa. v. 19. They *bantered* the prophet, and made a jeſt of that which he delivered with the greateſt ſerioufneſs. (1.) They *denied the truth* of what he ſaid; If that be the *word of the Lord* which thou ſpeakeſt to us, *where is it?* Why is it not fulfilled? Thus the patience of God was impudently abuſed, as a ground to queſtion his veracity. (2.) They *defied the terror* of what he ſaid; let God Almighty do his worſt, let all he has ſaid come to paſs, we ſhall do well enough; the lion is not ſo fierce as he is painted, *Amos* v. 18. Lord, to what purpoſe is it to ſpeak to men, that will neither *believe* nor *fear!*

5. He appeals to God concerning his faithful diſcharge of the office to which he was called, *ver.* 16. The people did all they could to make him weary of his work, to exaſperate him, and make him uneaſy, and to tempt him to prevaricate, and alter his meſſage, for fear of diſpleaſing them; but, Lord, ſaith he, *thou knoweſt* I have not yielded to them. (1.) He *kept conſtant to his work.* His office inſtead of being his credit and protection, expoſed him to reproach, contempt, and injury; and yet, ſaith he, *I have not haſtened from being a paſtor after thee*; I have not over-run my work, nor ſued for a diſcharge, or a *quietus.* Prophets were *paſtors* to the people, to feed them with the good word of God; but they were to be *paſtors after God,* and all miniſters muſt be ſo, *according to his heart,* chap. iii. 15. to follow him, and the directions and inſtructions he gives; ſuch a paſtor Jeremiah was; and though he met with as much difficulty and diſcouragement as ever any man did, yet he did not *fly off* as Jonah did, nor deſire to be excuſed from going any more on God's errands. Note, Thoſe that are employed for God, though their ſucceſs anſwer not their expectation, yet they muſt not therefore throw up their commiſſion, but continue to *follow God,* though the ſtorm be in their faces. (2.) He *kept up his affection* to the people. Though they were very abuſive to him, he was compaſſionate to them; *I have not deſired the woful day.* The day of the accompliſhment of his prophecies would be a *woful day* indeed to Jeruſalem, and therefore he deprecated it, and wiſhed it might never come; though as to himſelf, it would be the avenging of him upon his perſecutors, and the proving of him a true prophet, which they had queſtioned, *ver.* 15. and upon thoſe accounts he might be tempted to *deſire* it. Note, God doth not, and therefore miniſters muſt not, deſire the death of ſinners, but rather that they may turn and live. Though we *warn* of the woful day, we muſt not *wiſh* for it, but rather *weep* becauſe of it, as Jeremiah did. (3.) He *kept cloſe to his inſtructions*; though he might have curried favour with the people, or at leaſt have avoided their diſpleaſure, if he had not been ſo ſharp in his reproofs, and ſevere in his threatnings, yet he would deliver his meſſage *faithfully*; and that he had done ſo was a comfort to him; Lord, *thou knoweſt that which came out of my lips was right before thee,* i. e. it exactly agreed with what I had received from thee, and therefore thou art reflected upon in their quarrelling with me. Note, If what we ſay and do be *right before God,* we may eaſily deſpiſe the reproaches and cenſures of men: *It is a ſmall thing to be judged of their judgment.*

6. He humbly begs of God, that he would own him and protect him, and carry him on chearfully in that work, to which God had ſo plainly called him, and he had ſo ſincerely devoted himſelf. Two things he here deſires.

1. That he might have *comfort* in ſerving the *God* that *ſent* him, *ver.* 17. *Be not thou a terror to me.* Surely more is implied than is expreſſed; be thou a *comfort* to me, and let thy favour rejoice my heart, and encourage me, when my enemies do all they can to terrify me, and either to drive me from my work, or make me drive on heavily in it. Note, The beſt have that in them, which might juſtly make God a terror to them, as he was for ſome time to Job, *chap.* vi. 4. to Aſaph, *Pſal.* lxxvii. 3. to Heman, *Pſal.* lxxxviii. 15. And this is that which good men, *knowing the terrors of the Lord,* dread and deprecate more than any thing; nay, whatever frightful accidents may befal them, or how formidable ſoever their enemies may appear to them, they can do well enough, ſo long as God is not a *terror* to them. He pleads, *Thou art my hope*; and then nothing elſe is *my fear,* no, not *in the day of evil,* when it is moſt threatning, moſt preſſing. My dependence is upon thee, and therefore *be not a terror to me.* Note, Thoſe that by faith make God their confidence, ſhall have him for their comfort in the worſt of times, if it be not their own fault: if we make him our *truſt,* we ſhall not find him our *terror.*

2. That he might have *courage* in dealing with the *people* to whom he *was ſent,* ver. 18. They *perſecuted* him, who ſhould have entertained and encouraged him; Lord, ſaith he, *let them be confounded,* i. e. let them be *over-powered* by the convictions of the word, and made *aſhamed* of their obſtinacy, or elſe let the judgments threatned be at length executed upon them; but *let not me be confounded,* let not me be terrified by their menaces, ſo as to betray my truſt. Note, God's miniſters have work to do, which they *need not* be either aſhamed or afraid to go on in, but they *do need* to be helped by the divine grace to go on in it without ſhame or fear. Jeremiah had not *deſired the woful day* upon his country in general; but as to his perſecutors, in a juſt and holy indignation at their malice, he prays, *Bring upon them the day of evil,* in hopes the bringing it upon *them* might prevent the bringing of it upon *the country*; if they were taken away, the people would be better, therefore *deſtroy them with a double deſtruction,* i. e. let them be utterly deſtroyed, root and branch; and let the proſpect of that deſtruction be their preſent confuſion. This the prophet prays, not at all that he might be *avenged,* nor ſo much that he might be *eaſed,* but that *the Lord* may be *known by the judgments which he executeth.*

19. ¶ Thus ſaid the LORD unto me, Go and ſtand in the gate of the children of the people, whereby the kings of Judah come in, and by the which they go out, and in all the gates of Jeruſalem; 20. And ſay unto them, Hear ye the word of the LORD, ye kings of Judah, and all Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jeruſalem, that enter in by theſe gates. 21. Thus ſaith the LORD, Take heed to your ſelves, and bear no burden on the ſabbath-day, nor bring *it* in by the gates of Jeruſalem. 22. Neither carry forth a burden out of your houſes on the ſabbath-day, neither do ye any work, but hallow ye the ſabbath-day, as I commanded your fathers. 23. But they obeyed not, neither inclined their ear, but made their neck ſtiff, that they might not hear, nor receive inſtruction. 24. And it ſhall come to paſs, if ye diligently hearken unto me, ſaith the LORD, to bring in no burden through the gates of this city on the ſabbath-day, but hallow the ſabbath-day, to do no work therein: 25. Then ſhall there enter into the gates of this city, kings and princes ſitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots, and on horſes, they and their princes, the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jeruſalem, and this city ſhall remain for ever. 26. And they ſhall come from the cities of Judah, and from the places about Jeruſalem, and from the land of Benjamin, and from the plain, and from the mountains, and from the ſouth, bringing burnt-offerings, and ſacrifices, and meat-offerings, and incenſe, and bringing ſacrifices of praiſe unto the houſe of the LORD. 27. But if ye will not hearken unto me to hallow the ſabbath-day, and not to bear a burden, even entring in at the gates of Jeruſalem on the ſabbath-day: then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it ſhall devour the palaces of Jeruſalem, and it ſhall not be quenched.

Theſe verſes are a ſermon concerning *ſabbath-ſanctification*; it is a word which the prophet *received from the Lord,* and was ordered to deliver in the moſt ſolemn publick manner to the people; for they were ſent not only to reprove ſin, and to preſs obedience in general, but they muſt deſcend to particulars. This meſſage concerning the ſabbath probably was ſent in the days of Joſiah, for the furtherance of that work of reformation which he ſet on foot; for the promiſes here, *ver.* 25, 26. are ſuch as, I think, we ſcarce find, when things came nearer to the extremity. This meſſage muſt be proclaimed in all the places of concourſe, and therefore in *the gates,* not only becauſe *through them* people were continually paſſing and repaſſing, but becauſe in them they kept their courts, and laid up their ſtores. It muſt be proclaimed (as the king or queen is uſually proclaimed) at the *court-gate* firſt, the gate by which the *kings of Judah* uſe to *come in* and *go out,* ver. 19. Let them be told their duty firſt, particularly *this* duty; for if ſabbaths be not ſanctified as they ſhould be, *the rulers of Judah are* to be *contended with,* ſo they were, *Neh.* xiii. 17. for they are certainly wanting in their duty. He muſt alſo preach it *in all the gates of Jeruſalem.* It is a matter of great and general concern, therefore let all take notice of it. Let the *kings of Judah* hear the *word of the Lord,* for as high as they are he is above them, and *all the inhabitants of Jeruſalem*; for as mean as they are he takes notice of them, and of what they ſay and do on ſabbath-days. Obſerve,

1. How the *ſabbath* is to be *ſanctified,* and what is the law concerning it, *ver.* 21, 22. (1.) They muſt reſt from their worldly employments on the *ſabbath-day,* muſt do no ſervile work. They muſt *bear no burthen* into *the city,* or out of it, into *their houſes,* or out of them; neither husbandmens burdens of corn carried in, nor muck carried out; nor tradeſmens burdens of wares or merchandizes imported or exported. There muſt not a loaded

loaded horſe, or cart, or waggon be ſeen on the ſabbath-day, either in the ſtreets or in the roads; the porters muſt not ply on that day, nor muſt the ſervants be ſuffered to fetch in proviſions or fuel: It is a day of reſt, and muſt not be made a day of labour, unleſs in caſe of neceſſity. (2.) They muſt apply themſelves to that which is the proper work and buſineſs of the day; *hallow ye the ſabbath*, i. e. conſecrate it to the honour of God, and ſpend it in his ſervice and worſhip; and it is in order to this, that worldly buſineſs muſt be laid aſide, that we may be *entire for*, and *intent upon*, that work, which *requires* and *deſerves* the whole man. (3.) They muſt herein be very circumſpect; *take heed to your ſelves*, watch againſt every thing that borders upon the profanation of the ſabbath. Where God is *jealous*, we muſt be *cautious*. *Take heed to your ſelves*, for it is *at your peril*, if you rob God of that part of your time, which he has reſerved to himſelf. *Take heed to your ſouls*, ſo the word is; in order to the right ſanctifying of ſabbaths, we muſt look well to the frame of our ſpirits, and have a watchful eye upon all the motions of the inward man: Let not the ſoul be *burdened* with the cares of this world on ſabbath-days, but let that be employed, even all that is within us, in the work of the day. And, (4.) He refers them to the law, the ſtatute in this caſe made and provided: This is no new impoſition upon you, but is what *I commanded your fathers*; it is an ancient law, it was an article of the original contract; nay, it was a command to the patriarchs.

2. How the ſabbath had been profaned, *ver.* 23. Your fathers were required to keep holy the ſabbath day, *but they obeyed not*, they *hardned their necks* againſt this as well as other commands that were given them. This is mentioned to ſhew that there needed a reformation in this matter, and that God had a juſt controverſy with them for the long tranſgreſſion of this law, which they had been guilty of. They hardened their necks againſt this command, that they might not *hear* and *receive inſtruction* concerning other commands. Where ſabbaths are neglected, all religion ſenſibly goes to decay.

3. What bleſſings God had in ſtore for them, if they would make conſcience of ſabbath-ſanctification. Though their fathers had been guilty of the profanation of the ſabbath, they ſhould not only not ſmart for it, but their city and nation ſhould recover its ancient glory, if they would keep ſabbaths better, *ver.* 24, 25, 26. Let them take care to *hallow the ſabbath*, and *do no work therein*. And then,

(1.) The *court* ſhall flouriſh; *kings* in ſucceſſion, or the many branches of the royal family at the ſame time, all as great as *kings*, with other the *princes* that ſit upon *the thrones of judgment*, *the thrones of the houſe of David*, Pſal. cxxii. 5. ſhall ride in great pomp *through the gates* of *Jeruſalem*, ſome in chariots, and ſome on horſes, attended with a numerous retinue of the men of Judah. Note, The honour of the government is the joy of the kingdom, and the ſupport of religion would contribute greatly to both.

(2.) The *city* ſhall flouriſh. Let there be a face of religion kept up upon Jeruſalem, by the ſabbath-ſanctification, that it may anſwer its title, *the holy city*, and then it *ſhall remain for ever*, ſhall for ever *be inhabited*, ſo the word may be rendred; it ſhall not be deſtroyed and diſpeopled, as it is threatned to be. Whatever ſupports religion, tends to eſtabliſh the civil intereſts of a land.

(3.) The *country* ſhall flouriſh. The *cities of Judah*, and the *land of Benjamin* ſhall be repleniſhed with vaſt numbers of inhabitants, and thoſe abounding in plenty, and living in peace, which will appear by the multitude and value of their offerings which they ſhall preſent to God. And by this the flouriſhing of a country may be judged of; what doth it do for the honour of God. Thoſe that ſtarve their religion, either they *are* poor, or are in a fair way to *be ſo*.

(4.) The *church* ſhall flouriſh. *Meat-offerings*, and *incenſe*, and *ſacrifices of praiſe*, ſhall be *brought to the houſe of the Lord*, for the maintenance of the *ſervice* of that houſe, and the *ſervants* that attend it. God's inſtitutions ſhall be conſcientiouſly obſerved, no ſacrifices and incenſe ſhall be offered to idols, and alienated from God, but every thing ſhall go in the right chanel. They ſhall have both *occaſion* and *hearts* to bring *ſacrifices of praiſe* to God. This is made an inſtance of their proſperity: Then a people truly *flouriſh*, when religion flouriſheth among them. And this is the effect of ſabbath-ſanctification, when that branch of religion is kept up, other inſtances of it are kept up likewiſe, but when that is loſt, devotion is loſt either in ſuperſtition or profaneneſs. It is a true obſervation which ſome have made, that the ſtreams of all religion run either deep or ſhallow, according as the banks of the ſabbath are kept up or neglected.

4. What judgments they muſt expect would come upon them, if they perſiſted in the profanation of the ſabbath, *ver.* 27. *If ye will not hearken to me* in this matter, to keep the gates ſhut on ſabbath-days; ſo that there may be no unneceſſary *entring in*, or going out on that day: If you will break through the incloſure of the divine law, and lay that day in common with other days, know that God will *kindle a fire* in the *gates* of your city intimating, that it ſhall be kindled by an enemy beſieging the city, and aſſaulting the *gates*; and who ſhall take this courſe to force their entrance? Juſtly ſhall thoſe gates be fired that are not uſed as they ought to be, to ſhut out ſin, and to keep people in to an attendance on their duty. This fire ſhall devour even the *palaces* of Jeruſalem, where the princes and nobles dwell, who did not uſe their power and intereſt as they ought to have done, to keep up the honour of God's ſabbaths; but *it ſhall not be quenched*, until it has laid the whole city in ruins. This was fulfilled by the army of the Chaldeans, *chap.* lii. 13. The profanation of the ſabbath is a ſin for which God has often contended with a people by fire.

CHAP. XVIII.

In this chapter we have, (1.) *A general declaration of God's ways in dealing with nations and kingdoms; that he can eaſily do what he will with them, as eaſily as the potter can with the clay,* ver. 1—6. *But that he certainly will do what is juſt and fair with them; if he threaten their ruin, yet upon their repentance, he will return in mercy to them, and when he is coming towards them in mercy, nothing but their ſin will ſtop the progreſs of his favours,* ver. 7—10. (2.) *A particular demonſtration of the folly of the men of Judah and Jeruſalem, in departing from their God to idols, and ſo bringing ruin upon themſelves, notwithſtanding the fair warning given them, and God's kind intentions towards them,* ver. 11—17. (3.) *The prophet's complaint to God of the baſe ingratitude, and unreaſonable malice of his enemies, perſecutors, and ſlanderers, and his prayers againſt them,* ver. 18—23.

1. THE word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, ſaying, 2. Ariſe, and go down to the potters houſe, and there I will cauſe thee to hear my words. 3. Then I went down to the potters houſe, and behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. 4. And the veſſel that he made of clay, was marred in the hand of the potter, ſo he made it again another veſſel, as ſeemed good to the potter to make *it*. 5. Then the word of the LORD came to me, ſaying, 6. O houſe of Iſrael, cannot I do with you as this potter? ſaith the LORD. Behold, as the clay *is* in the potters hand, ſo *are* ye in mine hand, O houſe of Iſrael. 7. *At what* inſtant I ſhall ſpeak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to deſtroy *it*: 8. If that nation againſt whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. 9. And *at what* inſtant I ſhall ſpeak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant *it*: 10. If it do evil in my ſight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good wherewith I ſaid I would benefit them.

The prophet is here ſent to the *potter's houſe* (he knew where to find it) not to *preach* a ſermon, as before to the gates of Jeruſalem, but to *prepare* a ſermon, or rather to receive it ready *prepared*. Thoſe needed not to ſtudy their ſermons, that had them, as he had this, by immediate inſpiration. Go to *the potter's houſe*, and obſerve how he manageth his work, and there *I will cauſe thee*, by ſilent whiſpers, to *hear my words*. There thou ſhalt receive a meſſage to be delivered to the people. Note, Thoſe that would know God's mind, muſt obſerve his appointments, and attend there where he may *hear his words*. The prophet was never *diſobedient to the heavenly viſion*, and therefore went to the potter's houſe, *ver.* 3. and took notice how he *wrought his work upon the wheels*, juſt as he pleaſed, with a great deal of eaſe, and in a little time. And, *ver.* 4. when a lump of clay, that he deſigned to form into one ſhape, either proving too ſtiff, or having a ſtone in it, or ſome way or other came to be *marred in his hand*, he preſently turned it into another ſhape; if it will not ſerve for a veſſel of honour, it will ſerve for a veſſel of diſhonour, juſt *as ſeems good to the potter*. It is probable Jeremiah knew well enough how the potter wrought his work, and how eaſily he threw it into what form he pleaſed; but he muſt go and obſerve it *now*, that having the idea of it freſh in his mind, he might the more readily and diſtinctly apprehend that truth which God deſigned thereby to repreſent to him, and might the more intelligently explain it to the people. God *uſed ſimilitudes by his ſervants the prophets*, Hoſ. xii. 10. and it was requiſite they ſhould themſelves underſtand the ſimilitudes they uſed. Miniſters will make a good

a good uſe of their converſe with the buſineſs and affairs of this life, if they learn thereby to ſpeak more plainly and familiarly to people about the things of God, and to expound ſcripture compariſons. For they ought to make all their knowledge ſome way or other ſerviceable to their profeſſion.

Now let us ſee what the meſſage is which Jeremiah receives, and is intruſted with the delivery of, at the potter's houſe. While he looks carefully upon the potter's work, God darts into his mind theſe two great truths, which he muſt preach to *the houſe of Iſrael.*

1. That God hath both an *inconteſtable* authority, and an *irreſiſtible* ability to *form* and *faſhion* kingdoms and nations *as he pleaſeth*, ſo as to ſerve his own purpoſes. *Cannot I do with you as this potter, ſaith the Lord?* ver. 6. Have not I as abſolute a power over you in reſpect both of might and right? Nay, God has a clearer title to a dominion over us than the potter has over the clay, for he only gives it its form, whereas we have both matter and form from God. *As the clay is in the potter's hand* to be molded and ſhaped as he pleaſes, *ſo are ye in my hand.* This intimates, (1.) That God has an inconteſtable ſovereignty over us, is not debtor to us, may diſpoſe of us as he thinks fit, and is not accountable to us; and it would be as abſurd for us to diſpute this, as for the clay to quarrel with the potter. (2.) That it is a very eaſy thing with God to make what uſe he pleaſeth of us, and what changes he pleaſeth with us, and we cannot reſiſt him. One turn of the hand, one turn of the wheel, quite alters the ſhape of the clay, makes it a veſſel, unmakes it, new makes it. Thus are our times in *God's hand*, and not in our own, and it is in vain for us to ſtrive with him. It is ſpoken here of nations, the moſt politick, the moſt potent, are what God is pleaſed to make them, and no other; ſee this explained by Job, *chap.* xii. 23. *He increaſeth the nations, and deſtroyeth them, he enlargeth the nations, and ſtraitneth them again.* Pſal. cvii. 33, &c. and compare *Job* xxxiv. 29. *All nations before God are as the drop of the bucket*, ſoon wiped away, *or the ſmall duſt of the balance* ſoon blown away, *Iſa.* xl. 15. and therefore, no doubt, as eaſily managed, as the clay by the potter. (3.) That God will not be a loſer by any, in his glory, at long run, but if he be not glorified *by them*, he will be glorified *upon them.* If the potter's veſſel be *marred* for one uſe, it ſhall ſerve for another: thoſe that will not be monuments of mercy, ſhall be monuments of juſtice: *The Lord has made all things for himſelf, yea even the wicked for the day of evil*, Prov. xvi. 4. God formed us out of the clay, *Job.* xxxiii. 6. nay, and we are ſtill *as clay* in his hands, *Iſa.* lxiv. 8. and has not he the ſame power over us, that the potter has over the clay? *Rom.* ix. 21. and are not we bound to ſubmit, as the clay to the potter's wiſdom and will? *Iſa.* xxix. 15, 16.—xlv. 9.

2. That in the exerciſe of this authority and ability, he always goes by fixed rules of equity and goodneſs. He diſpenſeth favours indeed in a way of ſovereignty, but never puniſheth by arbitrary power. *High is his right hand*, yet he rules not with a *high hand*, but as it follows there, *Juſtice and judgment are the habitation of his throne*, Pſal. lxxxix. 13, 14. God *aſſerts* his deſpotick power, and tells us what he *might do*, but at the ſame time *aſſures* us, he will act as a righteous and merciful judge.

1. When God is coming againſt us in ways of judgment, we may be ſure it is for our ſins, which ſhall appear by this, that national repentance will ſtop the progreſs of the judgments, *ver.* 7, 8. If *God ſpeak concerning a nation, to pluck up* its fences that ſecure it, and ſo lay it open, its fruit-trees that adorn and enrich it, and ſo leave it deſolate; to pull down its fortifications, that the enemy may have liberty to enter in; its habitations, that the inhabitants may be under a neceſſity of going out, and ſo *deſtroy it* as either a vineyard, or a city is deſtroyed: in this caſe, if *that nation* take the alarm, and repent of their ſins, and reform their lives, turn every one from his evil way, and *return* to God, God will graciouſly accept them, will not proceed in his controverſy, will return in mercy to them, and though he cannot *change his mind*, he will *change his way*, ſo as that it may be ſaid he *repents him of the evil he ſaid he would do to them.* Thus often in the time of the Judges, when the *oppreſſed* people were *penitent* people, ſtill God raiſed them up ſaviours, and when they turned to God, their affairs preſently took a new turn. It was Nineveh's caſe, and we wiſh it had oftener been Jeruſalem's, ſee 2 *Chron.* vii. 14. It is an undoubted truth that a ſincere converſion from the evil of ſin, will be an effectual prevention of the evil of puniſhment; and God can as eaſily raiſe up a penitent people from their ruins, as the potter can make anew the veſſel of clay, when it was *marred in his hand.*

2. When God is coming towards us in ways of mercy, if any ſtop be given to the progreſs of that mercy, it is nothing but ſin that gives it, *ver.* 9, 10. *If God ſpeak concerning a nation, to build and to plant it*, i. e. to advance and eſtabliſh all the true intereſts of it; it is *his husbandry*, and *his building*, 1 Cor. iii. 9. and if he ſpeak in favour of it, *it is done*, it is increaſed, it is enriched, it is enlarged, its trade flouriſheth, its government is ſettled in good hands, and all its affairs proſper, and its enterprizes ſucceed. But if this nation which God has thus loaded with benefits, *do evil in his ſight*, and *obey not his voice*, if it loſe its virtue, and become debauched and profane: if religion grow into contempt, and vice get to be faſhionable, and ſo be kept in countenance and reputation, and there be a general decay of ſerious godlineſs among them, then God will turn his hand againſt them, will *pluck up* what he was planting, and *pull down* what he was building, *Jer.* xlv. 4. the good work that was in the doing, ſhall ſtand ſtill, and be let fall; and what favours were further deſigned ſhall be with-held, and this is called his *repenting of the good wherewith he ſaid he would benefit them*, as he changed his purpoſe concerning Eli's houſe, 1 *Sam.* ii. 30. and hurried Iſrael back into the wilderneſs, when he had brought them within ſight of Canaan. Note, Sin is the great miſchief-maker between God and a people: it forfeits the benefit of his promiſes, and ſpoils the ſucceſs of their prayers. It defeats his kind intentions concerning them, *Hoſ.* vii. 1. and baffles their pleaſing expectations from him. It ruins their comforts, prolongs their grievances, brings them into ſtraits, and retards their deliverances, *Iſa.* lix. 1, 2.

11. ¶ Now therefore go to, ſpeak to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jeruſalem, ſaying, Thus ſaith the LORD, Behold, I frame evil againſt you, and deviſe a device againſt you: return ye now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good. 12. And they ſaid, There is no hope, but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart. 13. Therefore thus ſaith the LORD, Aſk ye now among the heathen, who hath heard ſuch things: the virgin of Iſrael hath done a very horrible thing. 14. Will *a man* leave the ſnow of Lebanon, *which cometh* from the rock of the field? *or* ſhall the cold flowing waters that come from another place, be forſaken? 15. Becauſe my people hath forgotten me, they have burnt incenſe to vanity, and they have cauſed them to ſtumble in their ways *from* the ancient paths to walk in paths, in a way not caſt up; 16. To make their land deſolate, and a perpetual hiſſing: every one that paſſeth thereby ſhall be aſtoniſhed, and wag his head. 17. I will ſcatter them as with an eaſt-wind before the enemy: I will ſhew them the back and not the face in the day of their calamity.

Theſe verſes ſeem to be the application of the general truths laid down in the foregoing part of the chapter, to the nation of the Jews, and their preſent ſtate.

1. God was now ſpeaking concerning them, to *pluck up*, and to *pull down*, and to deſtroy; for it is that part of the rule of judgment that their caſe agrees with, *ver.* 11. *Go and tell* them, (ſaith God) *Behold, I frame evil againſt you, and deviſe a device againſt you.* Providence in all its operations is plainly working towards your ruin. Look upon your carriage towards God, and you cannot but ſee that you deſerve it; look upon his dealings with you, and you cannot but ſee that he *deſigns* it. He *frames evil*, as the potter *frames* the veſſel, ſo as to anſwer the end.

2. He invites them by repentance and reformation, to meet him in the way of his judgments, and ſo to prevent his further proceedings againſt them, *return ye now every one from his evil ways*, that ſo according to the rule before laid down, God may turn from the evil he had purpoſed to do unto you, and that providence which ſeemed to have been framed like a veſſel on the wheel *againſt you*, ſhall preſently be thrown into a new ſhape, and the iſſue ſhall be in favour of you. Note, The warnings of God's word, and the threatnings of his providence, ſhould be improved by us as ſtrong inducements to us to reform our lives; in which it is not enough to *turn from our evil ways*, but we muſt *make our ways and our doings good, conformable to the rule, to the law.*

3. He foreſees their obſtinacy, and their perverſe refuſal to comply with this invitation, though it tended ſo much to their own benefit, *ver.* 12. They ſaid, *There is no hope.* If we muſt not be delivered unleſs we return from our evil ways, we may even deſpair of ever being delivered, for we are reſolved *we will walk after our own devices.* It is to no purpoſe for the prophets to ſay any more to us, to uſe any more arguments, or preſs the matter any further, we will have our way whatever it coſt us; *we will do every one the imagination of his* own *evil heart*, and will not be under the reſtraint of the divine law. Note, That which ruins ſinners, is affecting to live as they liſt; they call it *liberty* to *live at large*, whereas for a man to be a ſlave to his luſts, is the worſt of ſlaveries. See how ſtrangely ſome mens hearts are hardened by the deceitfulneſs of ſin, that they will not ſo much as promiſe amendment; nay, they ſet the judgments of God at defiance; we will go on with *our own devices*, and let God go on with *his*, and we will venture the iſſue.

4. He

4. He upbraids them with the monſtrous folly of their obſtinacy, and their hating to be reformed: Surely never were people guilty of ſuch an abſurdity, never any that pretended to reaſon acted ſo unreaſonably, *ver.* 13. *Ask ye among the heathen*, even thoſe that had not the benefit of divine revelation, no oracles, no prophets, as Judah and Jeruſalem had, yet even among them, *Who hath heard ſuch a thing?* The Ninevites, when thus warned, turned from their evil ways: Some of the worſt of men, when they are told of their faults, eſpecially, when they begin to ſmart for them, will at leaſt promiſe reformation, and ſay they will endeavour to mend: But *the virgin of Iſrael* bids defiance to repentance, is reſolved to go on frowardly, whatever conſcience and providence ſay to the contrary, and thus *hath done a horrible thing*: She ſhould have preſerved her ſelf pure and chaſte for God, who had eſpouſed her to himſelf, but ſhe has alienated her ſelf from him, and refuſeth to return to him. Note, It is *a horrible thing*, enough to make one tremble to think of it, that thoſe who have made their condition ſad, by ſinning, ſhould make it deſperate, by refuſing to reform. Wilful impenitency is the groſſeſt ſelf-murther, and that is *a horrible thing*, which we ſhould abhor the thought of.

He ſhews their folly in two things:

(1.) In the nature of the ſin it ſelf, that they were guilty of: They forſook God for idols, which was the moſt *horrible thing* that could be, for they perfectly put a cheat upon themſelves, *ver.* 14, 15. *Will a* thirſty traveller *leave the ſnow*, that, being melted, runs down from the mountains *of Lebanon*, and, paſſing over *the rock of the field*, flows in clear, clean, cryſtal ſtreams? will he leave theſe, paſs theſe by, and think to mend himſelf with ſome dirty puddle-water? *Or, ſhall the cold flowing waters that come from any other place, be forſaken* in the heat of ſummer? No; when men are parched with heat and drought, and meet with cooling, refreſhing ſtreams, they will make uſe of them, and not turn their backs upon them. The margin reads it, *Will a man*, that is travelling the road, *leave my fields*, which are plain and level, *for a rock*, that is rough and hard, *or for the ſnow of Lebanon*, which, lying in great drifts, makes the road unpaſſable? Or, *ſhall the running waters be forſaken for the ſtrange cold waters?* No; in theſe things men know when they are well, and will keep ſo; they will not leave a certainty for an uncertainty; but *my people hath forgotten me*, ver. 15. hath quitted *a fountain of living waters, for broken ciſterns; they have burnt incenſe to* idols, that are as vain as *vanity* it ſelf, that are not what they pretend to be, nor can perform what is expected from them: They had not the common wit of travellers, but even their leaders *cauſed them to* err, and they were content to be miſled. 1. They left *the ancient paths*, which were appointed by the divine law, which had been walked in by all the ſaints, which was therefore the right way to their journey's end, a ſafe way, and, being well tracked, was both eaſy to hit, and eaſy *to walk in*: But when they were adviſed to keep to the good old way, they poſitively ſaid they would not, *Jer.* vi. 16. 2. They choſe by-paths; they walked *in a way not caſt up*; not in the highway, the king's highway, in which they might travel ſafely, and which would certainly lead them to their right end; but in a dirty way, a rough way, a way in which they could not but *ſtumble*; ſuch was the way of idolatry, ſuch is the way of all iniquity; it is a falſe way, it is a way full of ſtumbling blocks, and yet this way they choſe to walk in, and lead others in.

(2.) In the miſchievous conſequences of it. Though the thing it ſelf had been ill, they might have had ſome excuſe for it, if they could have promiſed themſelves any good out of it: But the direct tendency of it was *to make their land deſolate, and* conſequently themſelves miſerable (for ſo the inhabitants muſt needs be, if their country be laid waſte) and both themſelves and their land *a perpetual hiſſing*. Thoſe deſerve to be hiſſed, that have fair warning given them, and will not take it. *Every one that paſſeth by* their land ſhall make his remarks upon it, and *ſhall be aſtoniſhed, and wag his head*; ſome admiring, others commiſerating, others triumphing in the deſolations of a country that had been *the glory of all lands*. They ſhall wag their heads in deriſion, upbraiding them with their folly in forſaking God and their duty, and ſo pulling this miſery upon their own heads. Note, Thoſe that revolt from God, will juſtly be made the ſcorn of all about them; and having reproached the Lord, will themſelves be a reproach. *Their land* being made *deſolate*, in purſuance of their deſtruction, it is threatned, *ver.* 17. *I will ſcatter them as with an eaſt-wind*, which is fierce and violent, by it they ſhall be hurried to and fro *before the enemy*, and find no way open to eſcape: They ſhall not only flee *before the enemy*, that they may do, and yet make an orderly retreat, but they ſhall be ſcattered, ſome one way, and ſome another: And that which compleats their miſery is, *I will ſhew them the back and not the face in the day of their calamity*. Our calamities may be eaſily born if God look towards us, and ſmile upon us, when we are under them; if he countenance us, and ſhew us favour; but if he turn *the back* upon us, if he ſhew himſelf diſpleaſed; if he be deaf to our prayers, and refuſe us his help; if he forſake us, leave us to our ſelves, and ſtand at a diſtance from us, we are quite undone. *If he hide his face, who then can behold him?* Job xxxiv. 29. Herein God would deal with them as they had dealt with him, *chap.* ii. 27: *They have turned their back unto me, and not their face.* It is a righteous thing with God to ſhew himſelf ſtrange to thoſe in the day of their trouble, who have ſhewed themſelves rude and undutiful to him in their proſperity. This will have its full accompliſhment in that day, when God will ſay to thoſe, that, though they have been profeſſors of piety, yet were workers of iniquity, *Depart from me, I know you not*, nay, *I never knew you.*

18. ¶ Then ſaid they, Come, and let us deviſe devices againſt Jeremiah: for the law ſhall not periſh from the prieſt, nor counſel from the wiſe, nor the word from the prophet: come, and let us ſmite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words. 19. Give heed to me, O LORD, and hearken to the voice of them that contend with me. 20. Shall evil be recompenſed for good? for they have digged a pit for my ſoul: remember that I ſtood before thee to ſpeak good for them, *and* to turn away thy wrath from them. 21. Therefore deliver up their children to the famine, and pour out their *blood* by the force of the ſword, and let their wives be bereaved of their children, and *be* widows, and let their men be put to death, *let* their young men *be* ſlain by the ſword in battle. 22. Let a cry be heard from their houſes, when thou ſhalt bring a troop ſuddenly upon them, for they have digged a pit to take me, and hid ſnares for my feet. 23. Yet, LORD, thou knoweſt all their counſel againſt me to ſlay *me*: forgive not their iniquity, neither blot out their ſin from thy ſight, but let them be overthrown before thee; deal *thus* with them in the time of thine anger.

The prophet here, as ſometimes before, brings in his own affairs, but very much for inſtruction to us.

(1.) See here what are the common methods of the perſecutors: We may ſee this in Jeremiah's enemies, *ver.* 18.

1. They laid their heads together, to conſult what they ſhould do againſt him, both to be revenged on him for what he had ſaid, and to ſtop his mouth for the future. *They ſaid, Come, and let us deviſe devices againſt Jeremiah.* The enemies of God's people and miniſters have been often very crafty themſelves, and confederate with one another, to do them miſchief: What they cannot act to the prejudice of religion ſeparately, they will try to do in concert. *The wicked plotteth againſt the juſt.* Caiaphas, and the chief prieſts and elders, did ſo againſt our bleſſed Saviour himſelf. The oppoſition which the gates of hell give to the kingdom of heaven, is carried on with a great deal of curſed policy. God had ſaid, *ver.* 11. *I deviſe a device againſt you*; and now, as if they reſolved to be quits with him, and to outwit infinite wiſdom it ſelf, they reſolve to *deviſe devices againſt* God's prophet, not only againſt his perſon, but againſt the word he delivered to them, which they thought, by their ſubtle management, to defeat. O the prodigious madneſs of thoſe that hope to diſannul God's counſel!

2. Herein they pretended a mighty zeal for the church, which they ſuggeſted was in danger, if Jeremiah was tolerated to preach as he did. *Come*, ſay they, let us ſilence and cruſh him, *for the law ſhall not periſh from the prieſt; the law of truth is in their mouths*, Mal. ii. 6. and there we will ſeek it; the adminiſtration of ordinances according to the law, is in their hands, and neither the one nor the other ſhall be wreſted from them. *Counſel ſhall not periſh from the wiſe*; the adminiſtration of publick affairs ſhall always be lodged with the privy-counſellors, and miniſters of ſtate, to whom it belongs; *nor* ſhall *the word* periſh *from the prophets*, they mean thoſe of their own chooſing, that propheſied to them ſmooth things, and flattered them with viſions of peace. Two things they inſinuated, 1. That Jeremiah could not be himſelf a true prophet, but was a pretender, and a uſurper, becauſe he was neither commiſſioned by the prieſts, nor concurred with the other prophets, whoſe authority therefore will be deſpiſed, if he be ſuffered to go on. If Jeremiah be regarded as an oracle, farewel the reputation of our prieſts, our wiſe men, and prophets; but that muſt be ſupported, which is reaſon enough why he muſt be ſuppreſſed. 2. That the matter of his prophecies could not be from God, becauſe it reflected ſometimes upon the prophets and prieſts; he had charged them with being the ringleaders of all the miſchief, *chap.* v. 31. and deceiving the people, *chap.* xiv. 14. he had foretold that their *heart ſhould periſh*, and *be aſtoniſhed*, chap. iv. 9. that *the wiſe men ſhould be diſmayed*, chap. viii. 9, 10. that the prieſts and prophets ſhould be intoxicated, *chap.* xiii. 13. now this galled them more than any thing elſe; preſuming upon the promiſe of God's preſence with their prieſts and prophets, they could not believe he would ever leave them: The guides of the church muſt needs be infallible, and therefore he who foretold their being infatuated, muſt be condemned as a falſe prophet. Thus, under colour of zeal for the church, have its beſt friends been run down.

3. They agreed to do all they could to blaſt his reputation. *Come, let us ſmite him with the tongue*, put him into an ill name, faſten an ill character upon him, repreſent him to ſome as deſpicable, and fit to be ſlighted; to others, as dangerous, and fit to be proſecuted; to all, as odious, and not fit to be tolerated. This was their device, *fortiter calumniari, aliquid adhærebit*, to dreſs him up in bears skins, otherwiſe they could not bait him. They who projected this, it is likely, were men of figure, whoſe tongue was no ſmall ſlander, whoſe repreſentations, though never ſo falſe, would be credited both by princes and people, to make him obnoxious to the juſtice of the one, and fury of the other: The ſcourge of ſuch tongues will give not only ſmart laſhes, but deep wounds; it is a great mercy therefore to be *hid from it*, Job v. 21.

4. To ſet others an example, they reſolved they would not themſelves regard any thing he ſaid, though it appeared never ſo weighty, and never ſo well confirmed as a meſſage from God. *Let us not give heed to any of his words*, for, right or wrong, they will look upon them to be *his words*, and not the words of God. What good can be done with thoſe who hear the word of God, with a reſolution not to heed it, or believe it? Nay,

5. That they may effectually ſilence him, they reſolve to be the death of him, *ver.* 23. *All their counſel againſt me* is *to ſlay me*; they *hunt for the precious life*; and a precious life indeed it was that they hunted for. Long was this Jeruſalem's wretched character, *thou that killedſt* many of *the prophets*, and wouldſt have killed them all.

(2.) See here what is the common relief of the perſecuted: This we may ſee in the courſe that Jeremiah took, when he met with this hard uſage: He preſently applied himſelf to his God by prayer, and ſo gave himſelf eaſe.

1. He referred himſelf and his cauſe to God's cognizance, *ver.* 19. They would not regard a word he ſaid, would not admit his complaints, or take any notice of his grievances, but, *Lord*, (ſaith he) *do thou give heed to me*. It is matter of comfort to faithful miniſters, that if men will not give heed to their preaching, yet God will give heed to their praying. He appeals to God as an impartial Judge, that will hear both ſides, as every judge ought to do: Do not only *give heed to me*, but *hearken to the voice of them that contend with me*; hear what they have to ſay againſt me, and for themſelves, and then make it to appear, that thou *ſitteſt in the throne judging right*. Hear the voice of my contenders, how noiſy and clamorous they are, how falſe and malicious all they ſay is, and let them be *judged out of their own mouth*; *cauſe their own tongues to fall upon them*.

2. He complains of their baſe ingratitude to him, *ver.* 20. *Shall evil be recompenſed for good?* and ſhall it go unpuniſhed? Wilt not thou recompenſe me good for that evil? 2 *Sam.* xvi. 12. To render good for good is human, evil for evil is brutiſh, good for evil is chriſtian, but evil for good is deviliſh: It is ſo very abſurd and wicked a thing, that we cannot think but God will avenge it. See how great the evil was they did againſt him; *they digged a pit for his ſoul*; they aimed to take away his life, no leſs would ſatisfy them, and that, not in a generous way, by an open aſſault, againſt which he might have an opportunity of defending himſelf, but in a baſe, cowardly, clandeſtine way, *they digged pits for* him, which there was no fence againſt, *Pſalm* cxix. 85. But ſee how great the good was which he had done for them; *Remember that I ſtood before thee to ſpeak good for them*; he had been an interceſſor with God for them, had uſed his intereſt in heaven on their behalf, which was the greateſt kindneſs they could expect from one of his character. *Gen.* xx. 7. *He is a prophet, and he ſhall pray for thee.* This Moſes often did for Iſrael, and yet they quarrelled with him, and ſometimes *ſpake of ſtoning him.* He did them this kindneſs when they were in imminent danger of deſtruction, and moſt needed it. They had themſelves provoked God's wrath againſt them, and it was ready to break in upon them, but he ſtood in the gap, as Moſes, *Pſalm* cvi. 23. *and turned away* that *wrath*. Now, 1. This was very baſe in them: Call a man ungrateful, and you can call him no worſe: But it was not ſtrange that they who had forgotten their God, did not know their beſt friends. 2. It was very grievous to him, as the like was to David, *Pſalm* xxxv. 13. and *Pſalm* cix. 4. *For my love they are my adverſaries.* And thus diſingenuouſly do ſinners deal with the great Interceſſor, crucifying him afreſh, and ſpeaking againſt him on earth, while his blood is ſpeaking for them in heaven. See *John* x. 32. But, 3. It was a comfort to the prophet, that, when they were ſo ſpiteful againſt him, he had the teſtimony of his conſcience for him, that he had done his duty to them; and the ſame will be our rejoicing in ſuch a day of evil: *The blood-thirſty hate the upright, but the juſt ſeek his ſoul*, Prov. xxix. 10.

3. He imprecates the judgments of God upon them, not from a revengeful diſpoſition, but in a prophetical indignation againſt their horrid wickedneſs, *ver.* 21, 22, 23. He prays, 1. That their families might be ſtarved for want of bread; *deliver up their children to the famine*, to the famine in the country for want of rain, and that in the city through the ſtraitneſs of the ſiege: Thus let this iniquity of the fathers be viſited upon the children. 2. That they might be cut off *by the ſword* of war, which, whatever it was in the enemy's hand, would be in God's hand a ſword of juſtice. *Pour them out* (ſo the word is) *by the hands of the ſword*, let *their blood* be ſhed as profuſely as water, that *their wives* may be left childleſs, *and widows*, their husbands being taken away by *death*, or, as ſome underſtand it, by the *peſtilence*. *Let their young men*, that are the ſtrength of this generation, and the hopes of the next, *be ſlain by the ſword in battle.* 3. That the terrors and deſolations of war might ſeize them ſuddenly, and by ſurprize, that thus their puniſhment might anſwer their ſin, *ver.* 22. *Let a cry be heard from their houſes*, loud ſhrieks, *when thou ſhalt bring a troop* of the Chaldeans *ſuddenly upon them*, to ſeize them, and all they have, to make them priſoners, and their eſtates a prey, for thus they would have done by Jeremiah, they aimed to ruin him at once, ere he was aware, *they have digged a pit* for *me*, as for a wild beaſt, *and* have *hid ſnares for* me, as for ſome ravenous, noxious fowl. Note, They that think to enſnare others, will juſtly be themſelves enſnared in an evil time. 4. That they might be dealt with according to the deſert of this ſin, which was without excuſe: *Forgive not their iniquity, neither blot out their ſin from thy ſight*, i. e. let them not eſcape the juſt puniſhment of it; let them lie under all the miſeries of thoſe whoſe ſins are unpardoned. 5. That God's wrath againſt them might be their ruin. *Let them be overthrown before thee.* This intimates, that juſtice is in purſuit of them, that they endeavour to make their eſcape from it, but in vain; they ſhall be made to ſtumble in their flight, and, being overthrown, they will certainly be overtaken: And then, Lord, *in the time of thine anger*, do to them; he doth not ſay what he would have done to them; but do to them as thou thinkeſt fit, as thou uſeſt to do with thoſe whom thou art angry with; *deal thus with them.*

Now this is not written for our imitation; Jeremiah was a prophet, and, by the impulſe of the ſpirit of prophecy in the foreſight of the ruin certainly coming upon his perſecutors, might pray ſuch prayers as we may not; and if we think, by his example, to juſtify our ſelves in ſuch imprecations, we *know not what manner of ſpirit we are of*; our Maſter has taught us, by his precept and pattern, to *bleſs them that curſe us, and pray for them that deſpitefully uſe us*; yet it is written for our inſtruction, and is of uſe to teach us, 1. That thoſe who have forfeited the benefit of the prayers of God's prophets for them, may juſtly expect to have their prayers againſt them. 2. That perſecution is a ſin that fills the meaſure of a peoples iniquity very faſt, and will bring as ſure and ſore a deſtruction upon them as any other. 3. Thoſe that will not be won upon by the kindneſs of God and his prophets, will certainly at length feel the juſt reſentments of both.

CHAP. XIX.

The ſame melancholy theme is the ſubject of this chapter, that was of thoſe foregoing, the approaching ruin of Judah and Jeruſalem for their ſins; this Jeremiah had often foretold; here he has particular full orders to do it again. 1. *He muſt ſet their ſins in order before them, as he had often done, eſpecially their idolatry*, ver. 4, 5. 2. *He muſt deſcribe the particular judgments which were now coming apace upon them for theſe ſins*, ver. 6,—9. 3. *He muſt do this in the valley of Tophet, with great ſolemnity, and for ſome particular reaſons*, ver. 2, 3. 4. *He muſt ſummon a company of the elders together, to be witneſſes of this*, ver. 1. 5. *He muſt confirm this, and endeavour to affect his hearers with it, by a ſign, which was the breaking of an earthen bottle, ſignifying that they ſhould be daſhed to pieces like a potter's veſſel*, ver. 10,—13. 6. *When he had done this in the valley of Tophet, he ratified it in the court of the temple*, ver. 14, 15. *Thus were all likely means tried to awaken this ſtupid, ſenſleſs people to repentance, that their ruin might be prevented, but all in vain.*

1. THUS ſaith the LORD, Go and get a potters earthen bottle, and *take* of the ancients of the people, and of the ancients of the prieſts, 2. And go forth unto the valley of the ſon of Hinnom, which *is* by the entry of the eaſt-gate, and proclaim there the words that I ſhall tell thee: 3. And ſay, Hear ye the word of the LORD, O kings of Judah, and inhabitants of Jeruſalem, Thus ſaith the LORD of hoſts, the God of Iſrael, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, the which whoſoever heareth, his ears ſhall tingle. 4. Becauſe they have forſaken me, and have eſtranged this place, and have burnt incenſe in it unto other gods, whom neither they nor their fathers have known, nor the kings of Judah, and have filled this place with the blood of innocents; 5. They have built alſo the high places of Baal, to burn their ſons with fire *for* burnt-offerings unto Baal, which I commanded not, nor ſpake *it*, neither came *it* into my mind: 6. Therefore behold, the days come, ſaith the LORD, that this place ſhall no more be called Tophet, nor the valley of the ſon of Hinnom, but the valley of ſlaughter. 7. And I will make void the counſel of Judah and Jeruſalem in this place, and I will cauſe them to

to fall by the ſword before their enemies, and by the hands of them that ſeek their lives: and their carcaſes will I give to be meat for the fowls of the heaven, and for the beaſts of the earth. 8. And I will make this city deſolate, and an hiſſing: every one that paſſeth thereby ſhall be aſtoniſhed and hiſs, becauſe of all the plagues thereof. 9. And I will cauſe them to eat the fleſh of their ſons, and the fleſh of their daughters, and they ſhall eat every one the fleſh of his friend in the ſiege and ſtraitneſs, wherewith their enemies, and they that ſeek their lives, ſhall ſtraiten them.

The corruption of man having made it neceſſary that *precept* ſhould be *upon precept, and line upon line*, ſo unapt are we to receive, and ſo very apt to let ſlip the things of God, the grace of God has provided that there ſhall be accordingly *precept upon precept, and line upon line*, that thoſe who are irreclaimable, may be inexcuſable. For this reaſon, the prophet here is ſent with a meſſage to the ſame purpoſe with what he had often delivered, but with ſome circumſtances that might make it the more taken notice of, a thing which miniſters ſhould ſtudy, for a little circumſtance may ſometimes be a great advantage, and they that would win ſouls muſt be wiſe.

1. He muſt take of the elders and chief men both in church and ſtate, to be his auditors and witneſſes to what he ſaid; *the ancients of the people, and the ancients of the prieſts*, the moſt eminent men both in the magiſtracy, and in the miniſtry, that they might be *faithful witneſſes to record*, as thoſe, *Iſa.* viii. 2. It is ſtrange that theſe great men would be at the beck of a poor prophet, and obey his ſummons to attend him out of the city, they knew not whither, and they knew not why. But though the generality of the elders were diſaffected to him, yet, it is likely, there were ſome few among them who looked upon him as a prophet of the Lord, and would pay this reſpect to the heavenly viſion. Note, Perſons of rank and figure have an opportunity of honouring God, by a diligent attendance on the miniſtry of the word, and other divine inſtitutions; and they ought to think it an honour, and no diſparagement to themſelves, yea, though the circumſtances be mean and deſpicable: It is certain, the greateſt of men is leſs than the leaſt of the ordinances of God.

2. He muſt *go to the valley of the ſon of Hinnom*, and deliver this meſſage there; for *the word of the Lord* is not bound to any one place; as good a ſermon may be preached in the valley of Tophet, as in the gate of the temple: Chriſt preached on a mountain, and out of a ſhip. This valley lay partly on the ſouth ſide of Jeruſalem, but the prophet's way to it was *by the entry of the eaſt-gate*, ver. 2. *the ſun-gate*, ſo ſome render it, and ſuppoſe it to look not towards the ſun-riſing, but the noon ſun: *The potter's gate*, ſo ſome. This ſermon muſt be preached in that place, in *the valley of the ſon of Hinnom*, 1. Becauſe there they had been guilty of the vileſt of their idolatries, the ſacrificing of their children to Moloch, a horrid piece of impiety, which the ſight of the place might ſerve to mind them of, and upbraid them with. 2. Becauſe there they ſhould feel the foreſt of their calamities; there the greateſt ſlaughter ſhould be made among them; and it being the common ſink of the city, let them look upon it, and ſee what a miſerable ſpectacle this magnificent city ſhould be, when it ſhould be all like the valley of Tophet. God bids him go thither, *and proclaim there the words that I ſhall tell thee*, when thou comeſt thither; whereby it appears (as Mr. Gataker well obſerves) that God's meſſages many times were not revealed to the prophets before the very inſtant of time wherein they were to deliver them.

3. He muſt give general notice of a general ruin now ſhortly coming upon Judah and Jeruſalem, *ver.* 3. He muſt, as thoſe that make proclamation, begin with an, O yes, *Hear ye the word of the Lord*, though it be a terrible word, for you may thank yourſelves if it be ſo. Both rulers and ruled muſt attend to it at their peril; the *kings of Judah*, i. e. the king and his ſons, the king and his princes, and privy-counſellors, they muſt hear the word of the King of kings, for as high as they are, he is above them: The *inhabitants of Jeruſalem* alſo muſt hear what God hath to ſay to them: Both princes and people have contributed to the national guilt, and muſt concur in the national repentance, or they will both ſhare in the national ruin. Let them all know that *the Lord of hoſts*, who is therefore able to do what he threatens, though he is *the God of Iſrael*, nay, becauſe he is ſo, will therefore puniſh them in the firſt place for their iniquities, *Amos* iii. 2. he *will bring evil upon this place*, i. e. upon *Judah and Jeruſalem*, ſo ſurprizing, and ſo dreadful, that *whoſoever hears* it, *his ears ſhall tingle*; hears the prediction of it, hears the report and repreſentation of it; it ſhall make ſuch an impreſſion of terror upon him, that he ſhall ſtill think he hears it ſounding in his ears, and ſhall not be able to get it out of his mind. The ruin of Eli's houſe is thus deſcribed, 1 *Sam.* iii. 11. and of Jeruſalem, 2 *Kings* xxi. 12.

4. He muſt plainly tell them what their ſins were for which God had this controverſy with them, *ver.* 4, 5. Apoſtaſy from God, *they have forſaken me*; abuſe of the privileges of the viſible church, with which they had been dignified; *they have eſtranged this place*; Jeruſalem, the holy city, the temple, the holy houſe, which were deſigned for the honour of God, and the ſupport of his kingdom among men, they had alienated from thoſe purpoſes, and (as ſome render the word) *they had ſtrangely abuſed*: They had ſo polluted both with their wickedneſs, that God had diſowned both, and abandoned them to ruin. He chargeth them with an affection for, and the adoration of falſe *gods*, ſuch as *neither they nor their fathers have known*, ſuch as never had recommended themſelves to their belief and eſteem, by any acts of power or goodneſs done for them or their anceſtors, as that God had abundantly done whom they forſook, yet they took them at a venture for their *gods*: Nay, being fond of change and novelty, they liked them the better for their being upſtarts; and new faſhions in religion were as grateful to their fancies as in other things: They alſo ſtand charged with murther, wilful murther, from malice prepenſe; they *have filled this place with the blood of innocents*. It was Manaſſeh's ſin, 2 *Kings* xxiv. 4. *which the Lord would not pardon*. Nay, as if idolatry and murther committed ſeparately were not bad enough, and affront enough to God and man, they have put them together, have conſolidated them into one complicated crime, that of *burning their* children in the *fire to Baal*, ver. 5. which was the moſt inſolent defiance to all the laws both of natural and revealed religion, that ever mankind was guilty of; and by it they openly declared, they loved their new *gods* better than ever they loved the true God, though they were ſuch cruel taſkmaſters, that they required human ſacrifices, inhuman I ſhould call them, which the Lord Jehovah, whoſe all lives and ſouls are, never demanded from his worſhippers, never *ſpake* of ſuch a thing, nor *came it into his mind*. See *chap.* vii. 31.

5. He muſt endeavour to affect them with the greatneſs of the deſolation that was coming upon them: He muſt tell them, as he had done before, *chap.* vii. 32. that this *valley of the ſon of Hinnom* ſhall acquire a new name, *the valley of ſlaughter*, ver. 6. for, *ver.* 7. multitudes ſhall *fall* there *by the ſword*, when either they ſally out upon the beſiegers, and are repulſed; or attempt to make their eſcape, and are ſeized: They ſhall *fall before their enemies*, who not only endeavour to make themſelves maſters of their houſes and eſtates, but have ſuch an implacable enmity to them, that they *ſeek their lives*, they thirſt after their blood, and when they are dead, will not allow a cartel for the burying of the ſlain, but *their carcaſes* ſhall *be meat for the fowls of the heaven, and beaſts of the earth*. What a diſmal place will the valley of Tophet be then! And as for thoſe that remain within the city, and will not capitulate with the beſiegers, they ſhall periſh for want of food, when firſt they have eaten *the fleſh of their ſons and daughters*, and deareſt *friends*, through the *ſtraitneſs wherewith their enemies ſhall ſtraiten them*, ver. 9. This was threatned in the law, as an inſtance of the extremity to which the judgments of God ſhould reduce them, *Lev.* xxvi. 29. *Deut.* xxviii. 23. and was accompliſhed, *Lam.* iv. 10. And laſtly, the whole *city* ſhall be *deſolate*, the houſes laid in aſhes, the inhabitants ſlain, or taken priſoners; there ſhall be no reſort to it, nor any thing in it, but what looks rueful and horrid; ſo that *every one that paſſeth by ſhall be aſtoniſhed*, ver. 8. as he had ſaid before, *chap.* xviii. 16. That place which holineſs had made *the joy of the whole earth*, ſin had made the reproach and ſhame of the whole earth.

6. He muſt aſſure them, that all their attempts to prevent and avoid this ruin, ſo long as they continued impenitent and unreformed, would be fruitleſs and vain, *ver.* 7. *I will make void the counſel of Judah and Jeruſalem*, i. e. of the princes and ſenators *of Judah and Jeruſalem in this place*, in the royal palace, which lay on the ſouth-ſide of the city, not far from the place where the prophet now ſtood. Note, There is no fleeing from God's juſtice, but by fleeing to his mercy. They that will not make good God's counſel, by humbling themſelves under his mighty hand, God *will make void* their *counſel*, and blaſt their projects, which they think never ſo well concerted for their own preſervation. There is *no counſel* or ſtrength *againſt the Lord*.

10. Then ſhalt thou break the bottle in the ſight of the men that go with thee, 11. And ſhalt ſay unto them, Thus ſaith the LORD of hoſts, Even ſo will I break this people and this city, as *one* breaketh a potters veſſel that cannot be made whole again, and they ſhall bury *them* in Tophet, till *there be* no place to bury. 12. Thus will I do unto this place, ſaith the LORD, and to the inhabitants thereof, and *even* make this city as Tophet. 13. And the houſes of Jeruſalem, and the houſes of the kings of Judah ſhall be defiled as the place of Tophet, becauſe of all the houſes upon whoſe roofs they have burnt incenſe unto all the hoſt of heaven, and have poured out drink-offerings unto other gods. 14. Then came Jeremiah from Tophet, whither the LORD had ſent him to propheſy, and he ſtood in the court of the LORD's houſe, and ſaid to all the people, 15. Thus ſaith the LORD of hoſts

hosts the God of Israel, Behold, I will bring upon this city and upon all her towns all the evil that I have pronounced against it; because they have hardned their necks, that they might not hear my words.

The message of wrath delivered in the foregoing verses is here enforced, that it might gain credit, two ways.

1. By a visible sign. The prophet was to take along with him an *earthen bottle*, ver. 1. and when he had delivered his message, he was to *break the bottle* to pieces, *ver.* 10. and the same that were auditors of the sermon, must be spectators of the sign. He had compared this people, in the chapter before, to the potter's clay, which is easily marred in the making; but some might say, It is past that with us, we have been made and hardened long since: And what though you be? saith he, the potter's vessel is as soon broke in the hand of any man, as the vessel, while it is soft clay, is marred in the potter's hand, and its case in this respect much worse; that the vessel, while it is soft clay, though it be marred, may be moulded again, but after it is hardened, when it is broke, it can never be pieced again. Perhaps, what they see, will affect them more, than what they only hear talk of; that is the intention of sacramental signs, and teaching by symbols was anciently used. In the explication of this sign, he must inculcate what he had before said, with a further reference to the place where this was done, in the valley of *Tophet*.

(1.) As the bottle was easily, irresistibly, and irrecoverably broke, so shall *Judah and Jerusalem* be broke by the Chaldean army, *ver.* 11. They depended much upon the firmness of their constitution, and fixedness of their courage, which they thought hardened them like a vessel of brass; but the prophet shews, all that did but harden them like a vessel of earth, which, though hard, is brittle, and sooner broke, than that which is not so hard. Though they were made vessels of honour, still they were vessels of earth, and so they shall be made to know, if they dishonour God and themselves, and serve not the purposes for which they were made. It is God himself, who made them, that resolves to unmake them; *I will break this people, and this city*, dash them in pieces like *a potter's vessel*; the doom of the heathen, *Psalm* ii. 9. *Rev.* ii. 27. but now Jerusalem's doom, *Isa.* xxx. 14. *A potter's vessel*, when once broke, *cannot be made whole again, cannot be cured*, so the word is: The ruin of Jerusalem shall be an utter ruin; no hand can repair it, but his that broke it; and if they return to him, though he has torn, he will heal.

(2.) This was done *in Tophet* to signify two things,

1. That *Tophet* should be the receptacle of the slain: *They shall bury in Tophet, for want of room to bury elsewhere*; so some read it; and if they had had conveniences any where else, they would not have buried there, where all the filth of the city was carried. Or, as we read it, *They shall bury in Tophet, till there be no place to bury* any more there; they shall justle for room to lay their dead; and a very little room will then serve those, who, while they lived, *laid house to house, and field to field.* They that would be *placed alone in the midst of the earth*, while they were above ground, and obliged all about them to keep their distance, must lie with the multitude, when they are under ground, for there are innumerable before them.

2. That *Tophet* should be a resemblance of the whole city, *ver.* 12. *I will make this city as Tophet.* As they had filled the valley of *Tophet* with the slain, which they sacrificed to their idols, so God will fill the whole city with the slain, that shall fall as sacrifices to the justice of God. We read, 2 *Kings* xxiii. 19. of *Josiah's defiling Tophet*, because it had been abused to idolatry; which he did, as should seem, *ver.* 14. by *filling it with the bones of men*; and, whatever it was before, from thenceforward it was looked upon as a detestable place: Dead carcases and other filth of the city was carried thither, and a fire continually kept there, for the burning of it. This was the posture of that valley, when Jeremiah was sent thither to prophesy; and so execrable a place was it looked upon to be, that, in the language of our Saviour's time, hell was called, in allusion to it, *Gehenna*, the *valley of Hinnom*. Now, saith God, since that blessed reformation, when *Tophet* was defiled, did not proceed as it ought to have done, nor prove a thorough reformation, but though the idols in *Tophet* were abolished, and made odious, those in Jerusalem remained, therefore will I do with the city as Josiah did by Tophet, fill it with the bodies of men, and make it an heap of rubbish: Even *the houses of Jerusalem, and* those *of the kings of Judah*, the royal palaces not excepted, *shall be defiled as the place of Tophet*, ver. 13. and for the same reason, because of the idolatries that have been committed there; since they will not defile them by a reformation, God will defile them by a destruction, *because* upon the *roofs of their houses they have burnt incense unto the host of heaven.* The flat roofs of their houses were sometimes used by devout people as convenient places for prayer, *Acts* x. 9. and by idolaters they were used as high places, on which they sacrificed to strange gods, especially to *the host of heaven*, the sun, moon, and stars, that there they might be so much nearer to them, and have a clearer and fuller view of them. We read of those that *worshipped the host of heaven upon the house-tops*, Zech. i. 5. and of *altars on the top of the upper chamber of Ahaz*, 2 Kings xxiii. 12. This sin upon the house-tops brought a curse into the house, which consumed it, and made it a dunghil like *Tophet*.

2. By a solemn recognition and ratification of what he had said, *in the court of the Lord's house*, ver. 14, 15. The prophet returned *from Tophet* to the temple, which stood upon the hill over that valley, and there confirmed, and, probably, repeated, what he had said in the valley *of Tophet*, for the benefit of those who had not heard it: What he had said, he would stand to. Here, as often before, he both assures them of judgments coming upon them, and assigns the cause of them, which was their sin. Both these are here put together in a little compass, with a reference to all that had gone before. 1. The accomplishment of the prophecies is here the judgment threatned. The people flattered themselves with a conceit, that God would be better than his word; the threatning was but to frighten them, and keep them in awe a little; but the prophet tells them, they deceive themselves if they think so; for *thus saith the Lord of hosts*, that is able to make his words good, *I will bring upon this city, and upon all her towns*, all the lesser cities that belong to Jerusalem the metropolis, *all the evil that I have pronounced against it.* Note, Whatever men may think to the contrary, the executions of providence will fully answer the predictions of the word; and God will appear as terrible against sin and sinners, as the scripture makes him; nor shall the unbelief of men make either his promise or his threatning of none effect, or of less effect than it was thought to be of. 2. The contempt of the prophecies is here the sin charged upon them, as the procuring cause of this judgment. It is *because they have hardned their necks*, and would not bow and bend them to the yoke of God's commands, would *not hear my words*, i. e. would not heed them, and yield obedience to them. Note, The obstinacy of sinners in their sinful ways, is altogether long of themselves; if their necks are hardned, it is their own act and deed, they have hardned them; if they are deaf to the word of God, it is because they have stopped their own ear. We have need therefore to pray, that God, by his grace, would deliver us *from hardness of heart, and contempt of his word and commandments.*

CHAP. XX.

Such plain dealing as Jeremiah used in the foregoing chapter, one might easily foresee, if it did not convince and humble men, it would provoke and exasperate them, and so it did; for here we find, 1. *Jeremiah persecuted by Pashur, for preaching that sermon*, ver. 1, 2. 2. *Pashur threatned for so doing, and the word which Jeremiah had preached confirmed*, ver. 3,—6. 3. *Jeremiah complaining to God concerning it, and the other instances of hard measure that he had since he began to be a prophet, and the grievous temptations he had struggled with*, ver. 7,—10. *encouraging himself in God, lodging his appeal with him, not doubting but that he shall yet praise him, by which it appears he had much grace*, ver. 11, —13. *and yet peevishly cursing the day of his birth*, ver. 14,—18. *by which it appears he had sad remainders of corruption in him too, and was a man subject to like passions as we are.*

1. NOW Pashur the son of Immer the priest, who *was* also chief governour in the house of the LORD, heard that Jeremiah prophesied these things. 2. Then Pashur smote Jeremiah the prophet, and put him in the stocks that *were* in the high gate of Benjamin, which *was* by the house of the LORD. 3. And it came to pass on the morrow, that Pashur brought forth Jeremiah out of the stocks. Then said Jeremiah unto him, The LORD hath not called thy name Pashur, but Magor-missabib. 4. For thus saith the LORD, Behold I will make thee a terror to thy self, and to all thy friends, and they shall fall by the sword of their enemies, and thine eyes shall behold *it*, and I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall carry them captive into Babylon, and shall slay them with the sword. 5. Moreover, I will deliver all the strength of this city, and all the labours thereof, and all the precious things thereof, and all the treasures of the kings of Judah will I give into the hand of their enemies, which shall spoil them, and take them, and carry them to Babylon. 6. And thou Pashur, and all that dwell in thine house, shall go into captivity, and thou shalt come to Babylon, and there thou shalt die, and shalt be buried there, thou and all thy friends, to whom thou hast prophesied lies.

Here is, 1. Pashur's unjust displeasure against Jeremiah, and the fruits of that displeasure, *ver.* 1, 2. This Pashur was a priest, and therefore one would think should have protected Jeremia,

remiah, who was of his own order, a prieſt too; and the more, becauſe he was a prophet of the Lord, whoſe intereſts the prieſts, his miniſters, ought to conſult: but this prieſt was a perſecutor of him, whom he ſhould have patronized. He was *the ſon of Immer*, i. e. he was of the ſixteenth courſe of the prieſts, of which Immer, when theſe courſes were firſt ſettled by David, was father, 1 *Chron.* xxiv. 14. as Zechariah was of the order of Abiah, *Luke* i. 5. Thus this Paſhur is diſtinguiſhed from another of the ſame name, mentioned *chap.* xxi. 4. that was of the fifth courſe. This Paſhur was *chief governour in the temple*; perhaps he was only ſo *pro tempore*, the courſe he was head of being now in waiting; or, he was ſuffragan to the high-prieſt; or, perhaps, captain of the temple, or of the guards about it, *Acts* iv. 1. This was Jeremiah's great enemy. The greateſt malignity to God's prophets, was found among thoſe that profeſſed ſanctity, and concern for God and the church.

We cannot ſuppoſe that Paſhur was any of thoſe ancients of the prieſts that went with Jeremiah to the valley of Tophet, to hear him propheſy, unleſs it were with a malicious deſign to take advantage againſt him: but when he came into the courts of the Lord's houſe, it is probable, he was himſelf a witneſs of what he ſaid; and ſo it may be read, *ver.* 1, *He heard Jeremiah propheſying theſe things.* As we read it, the information was brought him by others, whoſe examinations he took; *he heard that Jeremiah propheſied theſe things*, and could not bear it; eſpecially that he ſhould dare to preach in the courts of the Lord's houſe, where he was *chief governour*, without his leave. When power in the church is abuſed, it is the moſt dangerous power of all other againſt it. Being incenſed at Jeremiah, (1.) He *ſmote* him, ſtruck him with his hand, or ſtaff of authority: Perhaps it was a blow intended only to diſgrace him, like that which the high-prieſt ordered to be given Paul, *Acts* xxiii. 2. he ſtruck him on the mouth and bid him hold his prating. Or, perhaps he gave him many blows, intended to hurt him; he beat him ſoundly as a malefactor. It is charged upon the husbandmen, *Matt.* xxi. 35. that they beat the ſervants. The method of proceeding here was illegal; the high-prieſt and the reſt of the prieſts ought to have been conſulted, Jeremiah's credentials examined, and the matter enquired into, whether he had an authority to ſay what he ſaid. But theſe rules of juſtice are ſet aſide and deſpiſed as meer formalities; right or wrong Jeremiah muſt be run down. The enemies of piety would never ſuffer themſelves to be bound by the laws of equity. (2.) He *put him in the ſtocks.* Some make it only a place of confinement; he impriſoned him. It rather ſeems to be an inſtrument of cloſer reſtraint than ſo, and intended to put him both to pain and ſhame. Some think it was a pillory for his neck and arms; others (as we) a pair of ſtocks for his legs: whatever engine it was, he continued in it all night, and in a publick place too, *in the high gate of Benjamin, which was* in or *by the houſe of the Lord*; probably, a gate through which they paſſed between the city and the temple. Paſhur intended thus to chaſtiſe him, that he might deter him from propheſying; and thus to expoſe him to contempt and render him odious, that he might not be regarded if he did propheſy. Thus have the beſt men met with the worſt treatment from this ungracious, ungrateful world; and the greateſt bleſſings of their age have been counted as the *off-ſcouring of all things.* Would it not raiſe a pious indignation, to ſee ſuch a man as Paſhur upon the bench, and ſuch a man as Jeremiah in the ſtocks! It is well there is another life after this, when perſons and things will appear with another face.

2. God's juſt diſpleaſure againſt Paſhur, and the tokens of that: *On the morrow Paſhur* gave Jeremiah his diſcharge, *brought him out of the ſtocks*, ver. 3. it is likely he continued him there, in little eaſe, as long as was uſual to continue any in that puniſhment. And now Jeremiah has a meſſage from God to him. We do not find that when he put him into the ſtocks, he gave him any check for what he did, but quietly and ſilently ſubmitted to the abuſe; *when he ſuffered, he threatned not*; but when he brought him out of the ſtocks, then God put a word into the prophet's mouth, which would awaken his conſcience, if he had any. For when the prophet of the Lord was bound, *the word of the Lord was not.* What can we think Paſhur aimed at in ſmiting and abuſing Jeremiah? whatever it is, we ſhall ſee by what God ſaith to him, he is diſappointed.

1. Did he aim to eſtabliſh himſelf and make himſelf eaſy, by ſilencing one that told him of his faults, and would be likely to leſſen his reputation with the people? he ſhall not gain this point; for, (1.) Though the prophet ſhould be ſilent, his own conſcience ſhall fly in his face and make him always uneaſy. To confirm this, he ſhall have a name given him, Magor-miſſabib, *terror round about*, or, *fear on every ſide*; God himſelf ſhall give him this name, whoſe calling him ſo, will make him ſo. It ſeems to be a proverbial expreſſion, beſpeaking a man not only in diſtreſs, but in deſpair; not only in danger on every ſide, that a man may be, and yet by faith may be in no terror, as David, *Pſal.* iii. 6. and xxvii. 3. but in *fear on every ſide*; and that a man may be when there appears no danger; *The wicked flee when no man purſues*, are in *great fear where no fear is.* This ſhall be Paſhur's caſe, *ver.* 4. *Behold, I will make thee a terror to thyſelf*, i. e. thou ſhalt be ſubject to continual frights, and thy own fancy and imagination ſhall create thee a conſtant uneaſineſs. Note, God can make the moſt daring ſinner a terror to himſelf; and will find out a way to frighten thoſe that frighten his people from doing their duty. And thoſe that will not hear of their faults from God's prophets, that are reprovers in the gate, ſhall be made to hear of them from conſcience, which is a reprover in their own boſoms, that will not be daunted or ſilenced. And miſerable is the man that is thus made a terror to himſelf! Yet this is not all; ſome are very much a terror to themſelves, but they conceal it, and ſeem to others to be pleaſant; but *I will make thee a terror to all thy friends*; thou ſhalt, upon all occaſions, expreſs thy ſelf with ſo much horror and amazement, that all thy friends ſhall be afraid of converſing with thee, and ſhall chooſe to ſtand aloof from thy torment. Perſons in deep melancholy and diſtraction are a terror to themſelves and all about them; which is a good reaſon why we ſhould be very thankful, ſo long as God continues to us the uſe of our reaſon, and the peace of our conſciences. (2.) His friends, whom he put a confidence in, and perhaps ſtudied to oblige, in what he did againſt Jeremiah, ſhall all fail him. God doth not preſently ſtrike him dead for what he did againſt Jeremiah, but lets him live miſerably, like Cain in the *land of ſhaking*; in ſuch a continual conſternation, as that wherever he goes, he ſhall be a continual monument of divine juſtice; and when it is asked, What makes this man in ſuch a continual terror? it ſhall be anſwered, It is God's hand upon him for putting Jeremiah in the ſtocks. His friends, that ſhould encourage him, ſhall all be cut off; they ſhall *fall by the ſword of the enemy*, and *his eyes ſhall behold it*; which dreadful ſight ſhall encreaſe his terror. (3.) He ſhall find in the iſſue, his terror is not cauſleſs, but that divine vengeance is waiting for him, *ver.* 6. he and his family ſhall *go into captivity*, even *to Babylon*; he ſhall neither die before the evil comes, as Joſiah, nor live to ſurvive it, as ſome did, but he ſhall die a captive, and ſhall, in effect, be buried in his chains, he *and all his friends.* Thus far is the doom of Paſhur. Let perſecutors read it and tremble; tremble to repentance, before they be made to tremble to their ruin.

2. Did he aim to keep the people eaſy, to prevent the deſtruction that Jeremiah propheſied of, and by ſinking his reputation, to make his words fall to the ground? It is probable he did; for it appears by *ver.* 6. he did himſelf ſet up for a prophet, and told the people they ſhould have peace; he *propheſied lies to them*, and becauſe Jeremiah's propheſy contradicted his, and tended to awaken thoſe whom he endeavoured to rock aſleep in their ſins, therefore he ſet himſelf againſt him. But could he gain his point? No, Jeremiah ſtands to what he hath ſaid againſt Judah and Jeruſalem; and God by his mouth repeats it. Men get nothing by ſilencing thoſe who reprove and warn them, for the word will have its courſe; ſo it had here,

(1.) The country ſhall be ruined, *ver.* 4. *I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon.* It had long been God's own land, but he will now transfer his title to it to Nebuchadnezzar, he ſhall be maſter of the country, and diſpoſe of the inhabitants; ſome to the ſword, and ſome to captivity, as he pleaſeth, but none ſhall eſcape him.

(2.) The city ſhall be ruined too, *ver.* 5. The king of Babylon ſhall ſpoil that, and carry all that is valuable in it to Babylon. 1. He ſhall ſeize their magazines and military ſtores, here called *the ſtrength of this city*, and turn thoſe againſt them. Theſe they truſted to as their ſtrength; but what ſtead could they ſtand him in, when they had thrown themſelves out of God's protection, and he who was indeed their ſtrength was departed from them. 2. He ſhall carry off all their ſtock in trade, their wares and merchandizes, here called *their labours*, becauſe it was what they laboured about, and got by their labour. 3. He ſhall plunder their fine houſes, and take away their rich furniture, here called their *precious things*, becauſe they valued them, and ſet their hearts upon them ſo much. Happy they who have ſecured to themſelves precious things in God's precious promiſes, which are out of the reach of ſoldiers. 4. He ſhall rifle the exchequer, and take away the jewels of the crown, and *all the treaſures of the kings of Judah.* This was that inſtance of the calamity, which was firſt of all threatned to Hezekiah long ago, as his puniſhment for ſhewing his treaſures to the king of Babylon's embaſſadors, *Iſa.* xxxix. 6. The treaſury they thought was their defence, but that betrayed them, and became an eaſy prey to the enemy.

7. ¶ O LORD, thou haſt deceived me, and I was deceived: thou art ſtronger than I, and haſt prevailed: I am in deriſion daily, every one mocketh me. 8. For ſince I ſpake, I cried out, I cried violence and ſpoil; becauſe the word of the LORD was made a reproach unto me, and a deriſion daily. 9. Then I ſaid, I will not make mention of him, nor ſpeak any more in his name. But *his word* was in mine heart as a burning fire ſhut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not *ſtay*. 10. ¶ For I heard the defaming of many, fear on every ſide: Report, *ſay they*, and we will report it: all my familiars watched for my halting,

ſaying, Peradventure he will be enticed, and we ſhall prevail againſt him, and we ſhall take our revenge on him. 11. But the LORD *is* with me as a mighty terrible one: therefore my perſecutors ſhall ſtumble, and they ſhall not prevail, they ſhall be greatly aſhamed; for they ſhall not proſper, *their* everlaſting confuſion ſhall never be forgotten. 12. But, O LORD of hoſts that trieſt the righteous, *and* ſeeſt the reins and the heart, let me ſee thy vengeance on them: for unto thee have I opened my cauſe. 13. Sing unto the LORD, praiſe ye the LORD: for he hath delivered the ſoul of the poor from the hand of evil doers.

Paſhur's doom was to be a *terror to himſelf*; Jeremiah, even now, in this hour of temptation, is far from being ſo; and yet, it cannot be denied, but that he is here, through the infirmity of the fleſh, at a mighty toſs within himſelf; good men are but men at the beſt; God is not extreme to mark what they ſay and do amiſs, and therefore we muſt not be ſo, but make the beſt of it. In theſe verſes it appears, that, upon occaſion of the great indignity and injury that Paſhur did to Jeremiah, there was a ſtruggle in his breaſt between his graces and his corruptions. His diſcourſe with himſelf and with his God upon this occaſion was ſomewhat perplexed; let us try to methodize it.

1. Here is a ſad repreſentation of the wrong that was done him, and the affronts that were put upon him; and this repreſentation, no doubt, was according to truth, and deſerves no blame, but was very juſtly and very fitly made to him that ſent him, and, no doubt, would bear him out. He complains, (1.) That he was ridiculed and laughed at; they made a jeſt of every thing he ſaid and did; and this cannot but be a grievance to an ingenuous mind, *ver.* 7, 8. *I am in deriſion, I am mocked*; they played upon him, and made themſelves and one another merry with him, as if he had been a fool, good for nothing but to make ſport. Thus he was continually, *I was in deriſion daily*; thus he was univerſally, *Every one mocks me*; the greateſt ſo far forget their own gravity, and the meaneſt ſo far forget mine. Thus our Lord Jeſus on the croſs was reviled, both by prieſts and people, and the revilings of each had their peculiar aggravation. And what was it that thus expoſed him to contempt and ſcorn? It was nothing but his faithful and zealous diſcharge of his office; *ver.* 8. they could find nothing for which to deride him, but his preaching; it was *the word of the Lord* that *was made a reproach:* that for which they ſhould have honoured and reſpected him, that he was intruſted to deliver the *word of the Lord* to them, was the very thing for which they reproached and reviled him. He never preached a ſermon, but though he kept as cloſe as poſſible to his inſtructions, they found ſomething or other in it for which to banter and abuſe him. Note, It is ſad to think, that though divine revelation be one of the greateſt bleſſings and honours that ever was beſtowed upon the world, yet it has been turned very much to the reproach of the moſt zealous preachers and believers of it. Two things they derided him for, 1. The manner of his preaching; *Since he ſpake, he cried out.* He had always been a lively affectionate preacher, and ſince he began to ſpeak in God's name, he always ſpake as a man in earneſt; he *cried aloud, and did not ſpare*, neither ſpared himſelf, nor ſpared them to whom he preached; and this was enough for them to laugh at, who hated to be ſerious. It is common for thoſe that are unaffected with, and diſaffected to, the things of God themſelves, to ridicule thoſe that are much affected with them. Lively preachers are the ſcorn of careleſs unbelieving hearers. 2. The matter of his preaching; he *cried violence and ſpoil.* He reproved them for the *violence and ſpoil* which they were guilty of towards one another; and he propheſied of the violence and ſpoil which ſhould be brought upon them, as the puniſhment of that ſin; for the former they ridiculed them as over-preciſe, for the latter as over-credulous, in both he was provoking to them, and therefore they reſolved to run him down. This was bad enough, yet he complains further, (2.) That he was plotted againſt and his ruin contrived; he was not only ridiculed as a weak man, but reproached and miſrepreſented as an ill man, and dangerous to the goverment. This he laments as his grievance, *ver.* 10. being *laughed at*, though it touches a man in a point of honour, yet it is a thing that may be eaſily *laughed at* again; for as it has been well obſerved, it is no ſhame to be laughed at, but to deſerve to be ſo. But there were thoſe that acted a more ſpiteful part, and with more ſubtilty, 1. They ſpoke ill of him behind his back, when he had no opportunity of clearing himſelf; and were induſtrious to ſpread falſe reports concerning him; *I heard*, at ſecond hand, *the defaming of many, fear on every ſide, of many Magor-miſſabibs*; ſo ſome read it; of many ſuch men as Paſhur was, and who may therefore expect his doom. Or, This was the matter of their defamation, they repreſented Jeremiah as a man that inſtilled fears and jealouſies on every ſide, into the minds of the people; and ſo made them uneaſy under the government, and diſpoſed them to a rebellion. Or, He perceived them ſo malicious againſt him, that he could not but be *afraid on every ſide*, wherever he was he had reaſon to fear informers; ſo that they made him almoſt a *Magor-miſſabib.* Theſe words are found in the original, *verbatim*, the ſame, *Pſal.* xxxi. 13. *I have heard the ſlander*, or *defaming of many, fear on every ſide*; Jeremiah in his complaint chooſeth to make uſe of the ſame words that David had made uſe of before him, that it might be a comfort to him to think, that other good men had ſuffered the like abuſes before him, and to teach us to make uſe of David's pſalms with application to ourſelves, as there is occaſion. Whatever we have to ſay, we may from thence take with us words. See how Jeremiah's enemies contrived the matter, *Report, ſay they, and we will report it.* They reſolve to caſt an odium upon him, and this is the method they take; let ſome very ill thing be ſaid of him, which may render him obnoxious to the government, and though it be never ſo falſe we will ſecond it, and ſpread it, and add to it; for the reproaches of good men loſe nothing by the carriage. Do you that frame a ſtory plauſibly, or you that can pretend to ſome acquaintance with him, report it once, and we will all report it from you, in all companies that we come into. Do you ſay it, and we will ſwear it; do you ſet it a going, and we will follow it. And thus both are equally guilty, they that raiſe, and they that propagate the falſe report: *The receiver is as bad as the thief.* 2. They flattered him to his face, that they might get ſomething from him on which to ground an accuſation, as the ſpies that came to Chriſt, feigning themſelves to be juſt men, *Luke* xx. 20. and xi. 53, 54. His familiars, that he converſed freely with, and put a confidence in, *watched for his halting*, obſerved what he ſaid, which they could, by any ſtrained *innuendo* put an ill conſtruction upon, and carried it to his enemies. His caſe was very ſad, when thoſe betrayed him whom he took to be his friends. They ſaid among themſelves, if we ſpeak him fair, and inſinuate ourſelves into his acquaintance, peradventure he will be enticed to own that he is in confederacy with the enemy, and a penſioner to the king of Babylon, or we ſhall wheedle him to ſpeak ſome treaſonable words, and then *we ſhall prevail againſt him*, and *take our revenge on him*, for telling us of our faults, and threatning us with the judgments of God. Note, Neither the innocence of the dove, no, nor the prudence of the ſerpent to help it, can ſecure men from unjuſt cenſure and falſe accuſation.

2. Here is an account of the temptation he was in under this affliction; his *feet were almoſt gone*, as the pſalmiſt's, *Pſal.* lxxiii. 2. And this is that which is moſt to be dreaded in affliction, being driven by it to ſin, *Neh.* vi. 13.

(1.) He was tempted to quarrel with God for making him a prophet. This he begins with, *ver.* 7. *O Lord, thou haſt deceived me, and I was deceived.* This, as we read it, ſounds very harſh; God's ſervants have been always ready to own that he is a faithful Maſter, and never cheated them, and therefore this is the language of Jeremiah's folly and corruption. If when God called him to be a prophet, and told him he would *ſet him over the kingdoms*, chap. i. 10. and *make him a defenced city*, he flattered himſelf with an expectation of having univerſal reſpect paid him as a meſſenger from heaven, and living ſafe and eaſy, and afterwards it proved otherwiſe, he muſt not ſay God had *deceived him*, but he had *deceived himſelf*; for he knew how the prophets before him had been perſecuted, and had no reaſon to expect better treatment. Nay, God had expreſly told them, that all the *princes, prieſts, and people of the land would fight againſt them*, chap. i. 19. which he had forgot, elſe he would not have laid the blame on God thus. Chriſt thus told his diſciples, what oppoſition they ſhould meet with, *that they might not be offended*, John xvi. 1, 2. But the words may very well be read thus, *Thou haſt perſwaded me, and I was perſwaded*, it is the ſame word that was uſed *Gen.* ix. 27. margin, *God ſhall perſwade Japhet.* And *Prov.* xxv. 15. *By much forbearance is a prince perſwaded.* And *Hoſ.* ii. 14. *I will allure her.* And this agrees beſt with what follows, *thou waſt ſtronger than I*, didſt overperſwade me with argument; nay, didſt over-power me by the influence of thy Spirit upon me, and *thou haſt prevailed.* Jeremiah was very backward to undertake the prophetical office, he pleaded that he was under age, and unfit for the ſervice; but God over-ruled his pleas, and told him *he muſt go*, chap. i. 6, 7. Now, Lord, ſaith he, ſince thou haſt put this office upon me, why doſt thou not ſtand by me in it? Had I thruſt myſelf upon it, I might juſtly have been in deriſion, but why am I ſo, when thou didſt thruſt me into it? It was Jeremiah's infirmity to complain thus of God, as putting a hardſhip upon him in calling him to be a prophet, which he would not have done, had he conſidered the laſting honour thereby done him, ſufficient to balance the preſent contempt he was under. Note, As long as we ſee ourſelves in the way of God and duty, it is weakneſs and folly, when we meet with difficulties and diſcouragements in it, to wiſh we had never ſet out in it.

(2.) He was tempted to quit his work and give it over, partly becauſe he himſelf met with ſo much hardſhip in it; and partly, becauſe thoſe to whom he was ſent, inſtead of being edified and made better, were exaſperated and made worſe, *ver.* 9. *Then I ſaid*, ſince by propheſying in the name of the Lord I gain nothing to him or myſelf, but diſhonour and diſgrace, *I will not make mention of him*, as my author for any thing I ſay, nor *ſpeak any more in his name*; ſince my enemies do all they can to ſilence me, I will even ſilence myſelf, and ſpeak no more, ſince I had as good ſpeak to the ſtones as to them. Note, It is a ſtrong temptation to poor miniſters

miniſters, to reſolve they will preach no more, when they ſee their preaching ſlighted and wholly ineffectual. But let people dread putting their miniſters into this temptation. Let not their labour be in vain with us, leſt we provoke them to ſay they will take no more pains with us, and provoke God to ſay, they ſhall take no more. Yet let not miniſters hearken to this temptation, but go on in their duty, notwithſtanding their diſcouragements, for, this is the more thankworthy; and though *Iſrael be not gathered*, yet they *ſhall be glorious*.

3. Here is an account of his faithful adherence to his work, and chearful dependence on his God notwithſtanding.

(1.) He found the grace of God mighty in him to keep him to his buſineſs, notwithſtanding the temptation he was in to throw it up. *I ſaid*, in my haſte, *I will ſpeak no more in his name*, what I have in my heart to deliver I will ſtifle and ſuppreſs: but I ſoon found it was *in mine heart as a burning fire ſhut up in my bones*, which glowed inwardly and muſt have vent, it was impoſſible to ſmother it; I was like a man in a burning fever, uneaſy, and in a continual toſs, while *I kept ſilence from good my heart was hot within me*, it was *pain and grief to me*, and I muſt ſpeak that I may be *refreſhed*, Pſal. xxxix. 2, 3. Job xxxii. 20. *While I kept ſilence my bones waxed old*, Pſal. xxxii. 3. See the power of the ſpirit of prophecy in thoſe that were acted by it; and thus will a holy zeal for God even *eat men up*, and make them forget themſelves: *I believed therefore have I ſpoken*. Jeremiah was ſoon weary with forbearing to preach, and could not contain himſelf; nothing puts faithful miniſters to pain ſo much as being ſilenced, nor to terror, ſo much as ſilencing themſelves. Their convictions will ſoon triumph over temptations of that kind; for *wo is unto me if I preach not the goſpel*, whatever it coſt me, 1 *Cor.* ix. 16. And it is really a mercy to have the Word of God thus mighty in us to over-power our corruptions.

(2.) He was aſſured of God's preſence with him, which would be ſufficient to baffle all the attempts of his enemies againſt him, *ver.* 11. They ſay, *we ſhall prevail againſt him*, the day will undoubtedly be our own: but I am ſure *they ſhall not prevail, they ſhall not proſper*, I can ſafely ſet them all at defiance, for *the Lord is with me*, is on my ſide, to take my part againſt them, *Rom.* viii. 31. to protect me from all their malicious deſigns upon me; He is with me to ſupport me, and bear me up under the burthen which now preſſeth me down: He is with me to make the Word I preach anſwer the end he deſigns, though not the end I deſire: He is with me as a mighty terrible one, to ſtrike a terror upon them, and ſo to overcome them. Note, Even that in God which is terrible, is really comfortable to his ſervants that truſt in him, for it ſhall be turned againſt thoſe that ſeek to terrify his people. God's being a mighty God, ſpeaks him a terrible God to all thoſe that take up arms againſt him, or any that, like Jeremiah, was commiſſioned by him. How terrible will the wrath of God be to thoſe that think to daunt all about them, and will themſelves be daunted by nothing. The moſt formidable enemies that act againſt us appear deſpicable, when we ſee the Lord for us as a *mighty terrible one*, Neh. iv. 14. Jeremiah ſpeaks now with a good aſſurance, if *the Lord be with me, my perſecutors ſhall ſtumble*, ſo that when they purſue me they ſhall not overtake me, *Pſal.* xxvii. 2. and then *they ſhall be greatly aſhamed* of their impotent malice, and fruitleſs attempts. Nay, *their everlaſting confuſion* and infamy *ſhall never be forgotten*; they ſhall not forget it themſelves, but it ſhall be to them a conſtant and laſting vexation whenever they think of it; others ſhall not forget it, but it ſhall leave upon them an indelible reproach.

(3.) He appeals to God againſt them as a righteous Judge, and prays judgment upon his cauſe, *ver.* 12. He looks upon God as the God that *tries the righteous*, takes cognizance of them, and of every cauſe that they are intereſted in: He doth not judge in favour of them with partiality, but *tries them*, and finding they have right on their ſide, and their perſecutors wrong them, and are injurious to them, he gives ſentence for them. He that tries the righteous tries the unrighteous too, and he is very well qualified to do both: For he *ſees the reins and the heart*, he certainly knows mens thoughts and affections, their aims and intentions, and therefore can paſs an unerring judgment on their words and actions. Now this is the God, (1.) To whom the prophet here refers himſelf, and in whoſe court he lodgeth his appeal: *Unto thee have I opened my cauſe*. Not but that God perfectly knew his cauſe, and all the merits of it without his opening; but the cauſe we commit to God we muſt ſpread before him, he knows it, but he will know it from us; and allows us to be particular in the opening of it, not to affect him, but to affect ourſelves. Note, It will be an eaſe to our ſpirits, when we are oppreſſed and burthened to *open our cauſe* to God, and pour out our complaints before him. (2.) By whom he expects to be righted: *Let me ſee thy vengeance on them*; ſuch vengeance as thou thinkeſt fit to take for their conviction and my vindication; the vengeance thou uſeſt to take on perſecutors. Note, Whatever injuries are done us, we muſt not ſtudy to avenge ourſelves, but muſt leave it to that God to do it *to whom vengeance belongs*, and who hath ſaid, *I will repay*.

(4.) He greatly rejoiceth and praiſeth God in a full confidence that God would appear for his deliverance, *ver.* 13. ſo full is he of the comfort of God's preſence with him, and the divine protection he is under, and the divine promiſe he has to depend upon, that, in a tranſport of joy, he ſtirs up himſelf and others to give God the glory of it: *Sing unto the Lord, praiſe ye the Lord*. Here appears a great change with him ſince he began this diſcourſe; the clouds are blown over, his complaints all ſilenced and turned into thankſgivings. He has now an entire confidence in that God whom, *ver.* 7. he was diſtruſting; ſtirs up himſelf to praiſe that Name, which, *ver.* 9. he was reſolving no more to make mention of. It was the lively exerciſe of faith that made this happy change, that turned his ſighs into ſongs, and his tremblings into triumphs. It is proper to expreſs our hope in God by our praiſing him, and our praiſing God by our ſinging to him. That which is the matter of the praiſe is, *He hath delivered the ſoul of the poor from the hand of the evil doers*; he means eſpecially himſelf, his own poor ſoul. He hath delivered me formerly when I was in diſtreſs, and now of late out of the hand of Paſhur, and he will continue to deliver me, 2 *Cor.* i. 10. He will *deliver my ſoul* from the ſin that I am in danger of falling into, when I am thus perſecuted. He hath *delivered me from the hand of evil doers*, ſo that they have not gained their point, nor had their will. Note, Thoſe that are faithful in well-doing, need not fear thoſe that are ſpiteful in evil-doing, for they have a God to truſt to, who has well-doers under the hand of his protection, and evil-doers under the hand of his reſtraint.

14. ¶ Curſed *be* the day wherein I was born: let not the day wherein my mother bare me be bleſſed. 15. Curſed *be* the man who brought tidings to my father, ſaying, A man-child is born unto thee, making him very glad. 16. And let that man be as the cities which the LORD overthrew, and repented not: and let him hear the cry in the morning, and the ſhouting at noon-tide: 17. Becauſe he ſlew me not from the womb; or that my mother might have been my grave, and her womb *to be* always great *with me*. 18. Wherefore came I forth out of the womb to ſee labour and ſorrow, that my days ſhould be conſumed with ſhame?

What is the meaning of this? Doth there *proceed out of the ſame mouth bleſſing and curſing?* Could he that ſaid ſo chearfully, *ver.* 13. *Sing unto the Lord, praiſe the Lord*, ſay ſo paſſionately, *ver.* 14. *Curſed be the day wherein I was born?* How ſhall we reconcile theſe? What we have in theſe verſes I ſuppoſe the prophet records to his own ſhame, as he had recorded that in the foregoing verſes to God's glory. It ſeems to be a relation of the toſs he had been in while he was in the ſtocks, out of which, by faith and hope, he had recovered himſelf, rather than a new temptation which he afterwards fell into, and it ſhould come in like that of David, *Pſal.* xxxi. 22. *I ſaid in my haſte, I am cut off*. Which is alſo implied, *Pſal.* lxxvii. 7. When grace has got the victory it is good to remember the ſtruggles of corruption, that we may be aſhamed of ourſelves and our own folly, may admire the goodneſs of God in not taking us at our word, and may be warned by it to double our guard upon our ſpirits another time. See here how ſtrong the temptation was which the prophet, by divine aſſiſtance, got the victory over, and how far he yielded to it, that we may not deſpair, if we through the weakneſs of the fleſh be at any time thus tempted. Let us ſee here,

1. What the prophet's language was in this temptation.

(1.) He faſtned a brand of infamy upon his birth-day, as Job did in a heat, *chap.* iii. 1. *Curſed be the day wherein I was born*. It was an ill day to me, *ver.* 14. becauſe it was the beginning of ſorrows, and an in-let to all this miſery. It is a wiſh that he had *never been born*, Judas in hell had reaſon to wiſh ſo, *Matt.* xxvi. 24. but no man on earth has reaſon to wiſh ſo, becauſe he knows not but he may yet become a veſſel of mercy, much leſs has any good man reaſon to wiſh ſo. Whereas ſome keep their birth-day in the return of the year with gladneſs, he will look upon his birth-day as a melancholy day, and will ſolemnize it with ſorrow, and will have it looked upon as an ominous day.

(2.) He wiſhed ill to the meſſenger that brought his father the news of his birth, *ver.* 15. It made *his father very glad* to hear that he had a child born (perhaps it was his firſt-born) eſpecially that it was a man-child, for then being of the family of the prieſts, he might live to have the honour of ſerving God's altar; and yet he is ready to curſe the man that brought him the tidings, when, perhaps, the father to whom they were brought gave him a gratuity for it. Here Mr. Gataker well obſerves, "That parents are "often much rejoiced at the birth of their children, when if they "did foreſee what miſery they are born to, they would rather "lament over them, than rejoice in them." He is very free and very fierce in the curſes he pronounces upon the meſſenger of his birth, *ver.* 16. *Let him be as the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, which the Lord utterly overthrew, and repented not*, i. e. did not in the leaſt mitigate or alleviate their miſery: *Let him hear the cry* of the invading beſieging enemy *in the morning*, as ſoon as he is ſtirring, then let him take the alarm, and by noon let him hear their *ſhouting* for victory. And thus let him live in conſtant terror.

(3.) He

(3.) He is angry that the fate of the Hebrews children in Egypt was not his, that he was not *ſlain from the womb*, that his firſt breath was not made his laſt, and that he was not ſtrangled as ſoon as he came into the world, *ver.* 17. He wiſheth the meſſenger of his birth had been better employed, and had been his murtherer: nay, that his mother of whom he was born, had been, to her great miſery, always *with child of him*; and ſo the womb in which he was conceived would have ſerved, without more ado, as a grave for him to be buried in: And Job intimates a near alliance and reſemblance between the womb and the grave, *Job* i. 21. *Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked ſhall I return thither.*

(4.) He thinks his preſent calamities ſufficient to juſtify theſe paſſionate wiſhes, *ver.* 18. *Wherefore came I forth out of the womb*, where I lay hid, was not ſeen, was not not hated, where I lay ſafe, and knew no evil, to ſee all this *labour and ſorrow*, nay, to have my *days conſumed with ſhame*, to be continually vexed and abuſed; not only to have my life ſpent in trouble, but waſted and worn away by trouble?

2. What uſe we make of this. It is not recorded for our imitation, and yet we may learn good leſſons from it.

1. See the vanity of human life, and the vexation of ſpirit that attends it. If there were not another life after this, we ſhould be tempted many a time to wiſh we had never known this, for our few days here are full of trouble.

2. See the folly and abſurdity of ſinful paſſion, how unreaſonably it talks when it is ſuffered to ramble. What nonſenſe is it to curſe a day? to curſe a meſſenger for the ſake of his meſſage? What a brutiſh, barbarous thing for a child to wiſh his own mother had never been delivered of him? See *Iſa.* xlv. 10. We can eaſily ſee the folly of it in others, and ſhould take warning from thence to ſuppreſs all ſuch intemperate heats and paſſions in our ſelves, to ſtifle them at firſt, and not ſuffer theſe evil ſpirits to ſpeak. When the heart is hot, let the tongue be bridled, *Pſal.* xxxix. 1, 2.

3. See the weakneſs even of good men, who are but men at the beſt: See how much thoſe who think they ſtand are concerned to take heed leſt they fall, and to pray daily, Father in heaven, *Lead us not into temptation.*

CHAP. XXI.

It is plain the prophecies of this book are not placed here in the ſame order that they were preached; for there are chapters after this which concern Jehoahaz, Jehojakim, and Jeconiah, who all reigned before Zedekiah, in whoſe reign the prophecy of this chapter bears date. Here is, (1.) The meſſage which Zedekiah ſent to the prophet, to deſire him to enquire of the Lord for them, ver. 1, 2. *(2.) The anſwer which Jeremiah, in God's name, ſent to that meſſage; in which he (1.) Foretels the certain and inevitable ruin of the city, and the fruitleſſneſs of their attempts for its preſervation,* ver. 3.—7. *(2.) He adviſeth the people to make the beſt of bad, by going over to the king of Babylon,* ver. 8.—10. *(3.) He adviſeth the king and his family to repent and reform,* ver. 11, 12. *and not to truſt to the ſtrength of their city, and grow ſecure,* ver. 13, 14.

1. THE word which came unto Jeremiah from the LORD, when king Zedekiah ſent unto him Paſhur the ſon of Melchiah, and Zephaniah the ſon of Maaſeiah the prieſt, ſaying, 2. Enquire, I pray thee, of the LORD for us, (for Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon maketh war againſt us) if ſo be that the LORD will deal with us according to all his wondrous works, that he may go up from us. 3. ¶ Then ſaid Jeremiah unto them, Thus ſhall ye ſay to Zedekiah, 4. Thus ſaith the LORD God of Iſrael, Behold, I will turn back the weapons of war that *are* in your hands, wherewith ye fight againſt the king of Babylon, and *againſt* the Chaldeans which beſiege you without the walls, and I will aſſemble them into the midſt of this city. 5. And I my ſelf will fight againſt you with an outſtretched hand, and with a ſtrong arm, even in anger, and in fury, and in great wrath. 6. And I will ſmite the inhabitants of this city, both man and beaſt: they ſhall die of a great peſtilence. 7. And afterwards, ſaith the LORD, I will deliver Zedekiah king of Judah, and his ſervants, and the people, and *ſuch as are* left in this city from the peſtilence, from the ſword, and from the famine, into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of thoſe that ſeek their life, and he ſhall ſmite them with the edge of the ſword: he ſhall not ſpare them, neither have pity, nor have mercy.

Here is, 1. A very humble decent meſſage which king Zedekiah ſent to Jeremiah the prophet when he was in diſtreſs. It is indeed charged upon this Zedekiah, that he *humbled not himſelf before Jeremiah the prophet, ſpeaking from the mouth of the Lord*, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 12. he did not always humble himſelf as he did ſometimes; never humbled himſelf till neceſſity forc'd him to it; he humbled himſelf ſo far as to deſire the prophet's aſſiſtance, but not ſo far as to take his advice, or be ruled by him. Obſerve,

1. The diſtreſs which king Zedekiah was now in: *Nebuchadrezzar made war upon him*, not only invaded the land, but beſieged the city, and now actually inveſted it. Note, Thoſe that put the evil day far from them, will be the more terrified when it comes upon them: and they who before ſlighted God's miniſters, may then perhaps be glad to court an acquaintance with them.

2. The meſſengers he ſent, Paſhur and Zephaniah, one of the 5th courſe of the prieſts, the other of the 24th, 1 *Chron.* xxiv. 9, 18. It was well that he ſent, that he ſent perſons of rank; but it had been better if he had deſired a perſonal conference with the prophet, which, no doubt, he might eaſily have had, if he would ſo far have *humbled himſelf.* Perhaps theſe prieſts were no better than the reſt, and yet when they were commanded by the king, they muſt carry a reſpectful meſſage to the prophet, which was both a mortification to them, and an honour to Jeremiah. He had raſhly ſaid, *chap.* xx. *ult. My days are conſumed with ſhame*, and yet here we find that he lived to ſee better days than thoſe were when he made that complaint; now he appears in reputation. Note, It is folly to ſay when things are bad with us, they will always be ſo. It is poſſible that thoſe that are deſpiſed may come to be reſpected; and it is promiſed, that thoſe who *honour God He will honour*, and thoſe who have *afflicted his people ſhall bow to them*, *Iſai.* lx. 14.

3. The meſſage itſelf, *Enquire, I pray thee, of the Lord for us*, ver. 2. Now the Chaldean army was got into their borders, into their bowels, they were at length convinced that Jeremiah was a true prophet, though loath to own it, and brought too late to it. Under this conviction they deſire him to ſtand their friend with God, believing him to have that intereſt in heaven which none of their other prophets had that had flattered them with hopes of peace. They now employ Jeremiah, (1.) To conſult the mind of God for them, *Enquire of the Lord for us*; ask him what courſe we ſhall take in our preſent ſtrait, for the meaſures we have hitherto taken are all broke. Note, Thoſe that will not take the direction of God's grace, how to get clear of their ſins, would yet be glad of the directions of his providence, how to get clear of their troubles. (2.) To ſeek the favour of God for them: So ſome read it, *intreat the Lord for us*; be an interceſſor for us with God. Note, Thoſe that ſlight the prayers of God's people and miniſters when they are in proſperity, may perhaps be glad of an intereſt in them when they come to be in diſtreſs: *Give us of your oil.* The benefit they promiſe themſelves is, *It may be the Lord will deal with us* now *according to the wondrous works he wrought for our fathers*, that the enemy may raiſe the ſiege, and *go up from us.* Obſerve (1.) All their care is to get rid of their trouble; not to make their peace with God, and be reconciled to him, that our enemy may *go up from us*; not that our God may return to us. Thus Pharaoh, *Exod.* x. 17. *Intreat the Lord that he may take away this death.* (2.) All their hope is, that God had done *wondrous works* formerly in the deliverance of Jeruſalem when Sennacherib beſieg'd it, at the prayer of Iſaiah: So we are told 2 *Chron.* xxxii. 20, 21. and who can tell but he may deſtroy theſe beſiegers (as he did thoſe) at the prayer of Jeremiah? But they did not conſider how different the character of Zedekiah and his people was from that of Hezekiah and his people: Thoſe were days of general reformation and piety, theſe of general corruption and apoſtaſy. Jeruſalem is now the reverſe of what it was then. Note, It is folly to think that God ſhould do for us while we hold faſt our iniquity, as he did for thoſe that held faſt their integrity.

2. A very ſtartling cutting reply, which God, by the prophet, ſent to that meſſage. If Jeremiah had been to have anſwered the meſſage of himſelf, we have reaſon to think he would have returned a comfortable anſwer, in hopes their ſending ſuch a meſſage was an indication of ſome good purpoſes in them, which he would be glad to make the beſt of, for he did not deſire the woful day. But God knows their hearts better than Jeremiah doth, and ſends them an anſwer which hath ſcarce one word of comfort in it. He ſends it them in the name of *the Lord God of Iſrael*, ver. 3. to intimate to them, that though God allowed himſelf to be called the *God of Iſrael*, and had done great things for Iſrael formerly, and had ſtill great things in ſtore for Iſrael, purſuant to his covenants with them, yet this ſhould ſtand the preſent generation in no ſtead, who were Iſraelites in name only, and not *in deed*, no more than God's dealings with them ſhould cut off his relation to Iſrael as their God. It is here foretold,

1. That God will render all their endeavours for their own ſecurity fruitleſs and ineffectual, *ver.* 4. I will be ſo far from teaching your hands to war, and putting an edge upon your ſwords, that I will *turn back the weapons of war that are in your hand*, when you ſally out upon the beſiegers to beat them of, ſo that they ſhall not give the ſtroke you deſign; nay, they ſhall recoil into your own faces, and be turned upon yourſelves. Nothing can make for thoſe who have God againſt them.

2. That

2. That the beſiegers ſhall in a little time make themſelves maſters of Jeruſalem, and of all its wealth and ſtrength. *I will aſſemble them in the midſt of this city*, that are now ſurrounding it. Note, If that place which ſhould have been a centre of devotion be made a centre of wickedneſs, it is not ſtrange if God make it a rendezvous of deſtroyers.

3. That God himſelf will be their enemy, and then I know not who can befriend them, no, not Jeremiah himſelf, *ver.* 5. I will be ſo far from protecting you, as I have done formerly in a like caſe, that *I myſelf will fight againſt you.* Note, Thoſe who rebel againſt God, may juſtly expect that he will make war upon them. And that (1.) With the power of a God, who is irreſiſtibly victorious. *I will fight againſt you with an out-ſtretched hand*, which will reach far, and *with a ſtrong arm*, which will ſtrike home, and wound deep. (2.) With the diſpleaſure of a God, which is indiſputably righteous. It is not a correction in love, but an execution *in anger, and in fury, and in great wrath:* it is upon a ſentence ſworn in wrath, againſt which there will lie no exception: and it will ſoon be found what a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God.

4. That thoſe who for their own ſafety decline ſallying out upon the beſiegers, and ſo avoid their ſword, yet ſhall not eſcape the ſword of God's juſtice, *ver.* 6. *I will ſmite thoſe that abide in the city* (ſo it may be read) *both man and beaſt*; both the beaſts that are for food, and thoſe that are for ſervice in war, foot and horſe, *they ſhall die of a great peſtilence*, which ſhall rage within the walls, while the enemies are encamped about them. Though Jeruſalem's gates and walls may for a time keep out the Chaldeans, they cannot keep out God's judgments. His arrows of peſtilence can reach thoſe that think themſelves ſafe from other arrows.

5. That the king himſelf, and all the people that eſcape the *ſword, famine* and *peſtilence*, ſhall fall *into the hands* of the Chaldeans, who ſhall cut them off in cold blood, *ver.* 7. They *ſhall not ſpare them*, nor *have pity* on them. Let them not expect to find mercy with men that have forfeited God's compaſſions, and ſhut themſelves out from his mercy. Thus was the decree gone forth, and then to what purpoſe was it for Jeremiah to *enquire of the Lord for them?*

8. ¶ And unto this people thou ſhalt ſay, Thus ſaith the LORD, Behold, I ſet before you the way of life, and the way of death. 9. He that abideth in this city ſhall die by the ſword, and by the famine, and by the peſtilence: but he that goeth out, and falleth to the Chaldeans that beſiege you, he ſhall live, and his life ſhall be unto him for a prey. 10. For I have ſet my face againſt this city for evil, and not for good, ſaith the LORD, it ſhall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he ſhall burn it with fire. 11. ¶ And touching the houſe of the king of Judah, *ſay*, Hear ye the word of the LORD, 12. O houſe of David, thus ſaith the LORD, Execute judgment in the morning, and deliver *him that is* ſpoiled, out of the hand of the oppreſſor, leſt my fury go out like fire, and burn that none can quench *it*, becauſe of the evil of your doings. 13. Behold, I *am* againſt thee, O inhabitant of the valley, *and* rock of the plain, ſaith the LORD; which ſay, Who ſhall come down againſt us? or who ſhall enter into our habitations? 14. But I will puniſh you according to the fruit of your doings, ſaith the LORD: and I will kindle a fire in the foreſt thereof, and it ſhall devour all things round about it.

By the civil meſſage which the king ſent to Jeremiah it appeared that both he and the people began to have a reſpect for him, which it had been Jeremiah's policy to make ſome advantage of for himſelf; but the reply which God obligeth him to make is enough to cruſh that little reſpect they begin to have for him, and to exaſperate them againſt him more than ever. Not only the predictions in the foregoing verſes were provoking, but the preſcriptions in theſe verſes: For here,

1. He adviſeth the people to ſurrender, and deſert to the Chaldeans, as the only means left them to ſave their lives, *ver.* 8, 9, 10. This counſel was very diſpleaſing to thoſe who were flattered by their falſe prophets into a deſperate reſolution to hold out to the laſt extremity, truſting to the ſtrength of their walls, and courage of their ſoldiery, to keep out the enemy, or to their foreign aids to raiſe the ſiege. The prophet aſſures them *the city ſhall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon*, and he ſhall not only plunder it, but *burn it with fire*, for God himſelf hath *ſet his face againſt this city for evil, and not for good*, to lay it waſte, and not to protect it; *for evil* which ſhall have no good mixed with it, no mitigation or merciful allay: and therefore, if you would make the beſt of bad, you muſt beg quarter of the Chaldeans, and ſurrender priſoners of war. In vain did Rabſhakeh perſuade the Jews to do this while they had God for them, *Iſa.* xxxvi. 16. but it was the beſt courſe they could take now God was againſt them. Both the law and the prophets had often ſet before them life and death in another ſenſe: Life if they obey the voice of God, death if they perſiſt in diſobedience, *Deut.* xxx. 19. But they had ſlighted that life which would have made them truly happy, to upbraid them with which the prophet here uſeth the ſame expreſſion, *ver.* 8. *Behold, I ſet before you the way of life, and the way of death*, which ſpeaks not as that, a fair propoſal, but a melancholy dilemma, adviſing them of two evils to chooſe the leaſt; and that leſſer evil, a ſhameful and wretched captivity is all the life now left for them to propoſe to themſelves. *He that abides in the city*, and truſts to that to ſecure him, ſhall certainly die either by *the ſword* without the walls, or *famine*, or *peſtilence* within. But he that can ſo far bring down his ſpirit, and quit his vain hopes, as to go out, and fall *to the Chaldeans, his life ſhall be given him for a prey*, i. e. he ſhall ſave his life, but with much difficulty and hazard, as a prey is taken from the mighty. It is an expreſſion like that, *he ſhall be ſaved, yet ſo as by fire.* He ſhall eſcape but very narrowly: or, he ſhall have ſuch a ſurpriſing joy and ſatisfaction in eſcaping with his life from ſuch a univerſal deſtruction, as ſhall equal theirs that divide the ſpoil. They thought to have made a prey of the camp of the Chaldeans, as their anceſtors did that of the Aſſyrians, *Iſa.* xxxiii. 23. but they will be ſadly diſappointed; if by yielding at diſcretion they can but ſave their lives, that is all the prey they muſt promiſe themſelves. Now one would think this advice from a prophet in God's name ſhould have gained ſome credit with them, and been univerſally followed; but for ought appears there were few or none that took it; ſo wretchedly were their hearts hardened to their deſtruction.

2. He adviſeth the king and princes to reform, and make conſcience of the duty of their place. Becauſe it was the king that ſent the meſſage to him, in the reply there ſhall be a particular word for *the houſe of the king*, not to compliment or court them, that was no part of a prophet's buſineſs, no not when they did him the honour to ſend to him, but to give them wholſome counſel, *ver.* 11, 12. *Execute judgment in the morning*; do it carefully and diligently. Thoſe magiſtrates that would fill up their place with duty, had need riſe betimes. Do it quickly, and do not delay to do juſtice upon appeals made to you, and tire out poor petitioners as you have done. Do not lie in your beds in a morning to ſleep away the debauch of the night before, nor ſpend the morning in pampering the body, as thoſe princes, *Eccleſ.* x. 16. but ſpend it in the diſpatch of buſineſs. You would be delivered out of the hand of thoſe that diſtreſs you, and expect that therein God ſhould do you juſtice, ſee then that you do juſtice to thoſe that apply themſelves to you, and *deliver them out of the hand of their oppreſſors, leſt my fury go out like fire* againſt you in a particular manner, and you fare worſt, who think to eſcape beſt, *becauſe of the evil of your doings.* Now, (1.) This intimates that it was their neglect to do their duty that brought all this deſolation upon the people. It was the *evil of their doings* that kindled the *fire* of God's wrath. Thus plainly doth he deal even with the *houſe of the king*; for thoſe that would have the benefit of a prophet's prayers, muſt thankfully take a prophet's reproofs. (2.) This directs them to take the right method for a national reformation: The princes muſt begin and ſet a good example, and then the people will be invited to reform. They muſt uſe their power for the puniſhment of wrong, and then the people will be obliged to reform. He minds them that they are the houſe of David, and therefore ſhould tread in his ſteps, who executed judgment and juſtice to his people. (3.) This gives them ſome encouragement to hope that there may yet be a lengthening of their tranquillity, *Dan.* iv. 27. If any thing will recover their ſtate from the brink of ruin, this will.

3. He ſhews them the vanity of all their hopes ſo long as they continued unreform'd, *ver.* 13, 14. Jeruſalem is an *inhabitant of the valley*, guarded with mountains on all ſides, which were their natural fortifications, making it difficult for an army to approach them. It is a *rock of the plain*, which made it difficult for an army to undermine them. Theſe advantages of their ſituation they truſted to more than to the power and promiſe of God: and thinking their city by theſe means to be impregnable, they ſet the judgments of God at defiance, ſaying, *Who ſhall come down againſt us?* None of our neighbours dare make a deſcent upon us; or, if they do, *Who ſhall enter into our habitations?* They had ſome colour for this confidence; for it appears to have been the ſenſe of all their neighbours, that no enemy could force his way into Jeruſalem, *Lam.* iv. 12. But thoſe are leaſt ſafe that are moſt ſecure. God ſoon ſhews the vanity of that challenge, *Who ſhall come down againſt us?* when he ſaith, *ver.* 13. *Behold, I am againſt thee.* They had indeed, by their wickedneſs, driven God out of their city, when he would have tarried with them as a friend; but they could not by their bulwarks keep him out of their city when he came againſt them as an enemy. If God be for us, who can be againſt us? but if he be againſt us, who can be for us to ſtand us in any ſtead? Nay, he comes againſt them not as an enemy that may lawfully, and with ſome hope of ſucceſs be reſiſted, but as a judge that cannot be reſiſted; for he ſaith, *ver.* 14. *I will puniſh you*, by due courſe of law, *according to the fruit of your doings*, i. e. according to the merit of them, and the direct tendency of them. That ſhall be brought upon you which is the natural product of ſin: Nay, he will not only come with the anger of an enemy, and the juſtice of a judge,

a judge, but with the force of a consuming fire, which has no compassion as a judge sometimes has, nor spares any thing combustible that comes in its way. Jerusalem is become a forest, in which God will *kindle a fire* that shall consume all before it; for our God is himself *a consuming fire*, and *who is able to stand in his sight* when once he is angry?

CHAP. XXII.

Upon occasion of the message sent in the foregoing chapter to the house of the king, *we have here recorded some sermons which Jeremiah preached at court, in some preceding reigns, that it might appear they had had fair warning long before that fatal sentence was pronounced upon them, and were put in a way to have prevented it. Here is (1.) A message sent to the royal family, as it should seem, in the reign of Jehoiakim, relating partly to Jehoahaz, who was carried away captive into Egypt, and partly to Jehoiakim, who succeeded him, and was now upon the throne. The king and princes are exhorted to execute judgment, and are assured that if they did so, the royal family should flourish, but otherwise it should be ruined*, ver. 1,—10. *Jehoahaz, called here Shallum, is lamented*, ver. 10,—12. *Jehoiakim is reproved and threatned*, ver. 13,—19. *(2.) Another message sent them in the reign of Jehoiachin, alias Jeconiah, the son of Jehoiakim. He is charged with an obstinate refusal to hear, threatned with destruction, and it is foretold that in him Solomon's house should fail*, ver. 20,—30.

THUS saith the LORD, Go down to the house of the king of Judah, and speak there this word, 2 And say, Hear the word of the LORD, O king of Judah, that sittest upon the throne of David, thou, and thy servants, and thy people that enter in by these gates; 3 Thus saith the LORD, Execute ye judgment and righteousness, and deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor: and do no wrong, do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, neither shed innocent blood in this place. 4. For if ye do this thing indeed, then shall there enter in by the gates of this house, kings sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots, and on horses, he, and his servants, and his people. 5. But if ye will not hear these words, I swear by myself, saith the LORD, that this house shall become a desolation. 6. For thus saith the LORD unto the king's house of Judah, Thou *art* Gilead unto me, *and* the head of Lebanon: *yet* surely I will make thee a wilderness, *and* cities *which* are not inhabited. 7. And I will prepare destroyers against thee, every one with his weapons, and they shall cut down thy choice cedars, and cast them into the fire. 8. And many nations shall pass by this city, and they shall say every man to his neighbour, Wherefore hath the LORD done thus unto this great city? 9. Then they shall answer, Because they have forsaken the covenant of the LORD their God, and worshipped other gods, and served them.

Here is, 1. Orders given to Jeremiah to go preach before the king. In the chapter before, Zedekiah sent messengers to the prophet, but here the prophet is bidden to go in his own proper person *to the house of the king*, and demand his attention to the word of the King of kings, *ver.* 2. *Hear the word of the Lord, O king of Judah.* Subjects must own, that where the word of a king is, there is power over them, but kings must own, that where the word of the Lord is, there is power over them. The *king of Judah* is here spoken to, as *sitting upon the throne of David*, who was a man after God's own heart, as holding their dignity and power by the covenant made with him; let them therefore conform to his example, that they may have the benefit of the promises made to him. With *the king*, his *servants* are spoken to, because a good government depends upon a good ministry, as well as a good king.

2. Instructions given him what to preach.

1. He must tell them what was their duty, what was the good which the Lord their God required of them, *ver.* 3. They must take care, (1.) That they do all the good they can with the power they have. They must do justice in defence of those that were injured, and must *deliver the spoiled out of the hand of their oppressors.* This was the duty of their place, *Psalm* lxxxii. 3. Herein they must be ministers of God for good. (2.) That they do no hurt with it, *no wrong, no violence.* That is the greatest *wrong* and *violence* which is done under colour of law and justice, and by those whose business it is to punish and protect from *wrong* and *violence.* They must *do no wrong to the stranger, fatherless, and widow*, for these God doth in a particular manner patronize, and take under his tuition, *Exod.* xxii. 21, 22.

2. He must assure them that the faithful discharge of their duty would advance and secure their posterity, *ver.* 4. There shall then be a succession of kings, an uninterrupted succession *upon the throne of David*, and of his line: these enjoying a perfect tranquillity, and living in great state and dignity, *riding on chariots and horses*, as before, *chap.* xvii. 25. Note, The most effectual way to preserve the dignity of the government, is to do the duty of it.

3. He must likewise assure them that the iniquity of their family, if they persisted in it, would be the ruin of their family, though it was a royal family, *ver.* 5. *If ye will not hear*, will not obey, *this house shall become a desolation*, the palace of the kings of Judah shall fare no better than other habitations in Jerusalem. Sin has often been the ruin of royal palaces, though never so stately, never so strong. This sentence is ratified by an oath. *I swear by myself* (and God can swear by no greater, *Heb.* vi. 12.) that this house shall be laid in ruins. Note, Sin will be the ruin of the houses of princes, as well as of mean men.

4. He must shew how fatal their wickedness would be to their kingdom as well as to themselves, to Jerusalem especially, the royal city, *ver.* 6, 7, 8, 9. (1.) It is confessed that Judah and Jerusalem had been valuable in God's eyes, and considerable in their own: *Thou art Gilead unto me, and the head of Lebanon.* Their lot was cast in a place that was rich and pleasant as Gilead; Zion was a strong hold, as stately as Lebanon: This they trusted to as their security. But (2.) This shall not protect them: the country that is now fruitful as Gilead, shall be made *a wilderness.* The cities that are now strong as Lebanon shall be cities *not inhabited*; and when the country is laid waste, the cities must be dispeopled. See how easily God's judgments can ruin a nation, and how certainly sin will do it.

When this desolating work is to be done, (1.) There shall be those that shall do it effectually; *ver.* 7. *I will prepare destroyers against thee*, I will *sanctify* them, so the word is, I will appoint them to this service, and use them in it. Note, When destruction is designed, destroyers are *prepared*, and perhaps are in the preparing, and things are working towards the designed destruction, and are getting ready for it long before. And who can contend with destroyers of God's preparing? They shall destroy cities as easily as men fell trees in a forest. *They shall cut down thy choice cedars*, and yet when they are down, shall value them no more than thorns and briers, they shall *cast them into the fire*, for their choicest cedars are become rotten ones, and good for nothing else. (2.) There shall be those who shall be ready to justify God in the doing of it, *ver.* 8, 9. Persons of *many nations*, when they *pass by* the ruins of this *city*, in their travels, will ask, *Wherefore hath the Lord done thus unto this city?* How came so strong a city to be overpowered? So rich a city to be impoverished? So populous a city to be depopulated? So holy a city to be profaned? And a city that had been so dear to God to be abandoned by him? And the reason is so obvious, that it shall be ready in every man's mouth: Ask them *that go by the way*, *Job* xxi. 29. Ask the next man you meet, and he will tell you, it was because they changed their gods, which other nations never used to do. They forsook *the covenant* of Jehovah their own God, revolted from their allegiance to him, and from the duty which their covenant with him bound them to, and they *worshipped other gods, and served them* in contempt of him, and therefore he gave them up to this destruction. Note, God never casts any off, until they first cast him off. *Go*, saith God to the prophet, and preach this to the royal family.

10. ¶ Weep ye not for the dead, neither bemoan him, *but* weep sore for him that goeth away: for he shall return no more, nor see his native country. 11. For thus saith the LORD, touching Shallum the son of Josiah king of Judah, which reigned in stead of Josiah his father, which went forth out of this place, He shall not return thither any more: 12. But he shall die in the place whither they have led him captive, and shall see this land no more. 13. ¶ Wo unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; *that* useth his neighbours service without wages, and giveth him not for his work: 14. That saith, I will build me a wide house, and large chambers, and cutteth him out windows, and *it is* cieled with cedar, and painted with vermilion. 15. Shalt thou reign, because thou closest *thyself* in cedar? did not thy father eat and drink, and do judgment and justice, *and* then *it was* well with him? 16. He judged the cause of the poor and needy, then *it was* well *with him*: *was* not this to know me? saith the LORD. 17. But thine eyes and thine heart *are* not but for thy covetousness, and for to shed innocent blood, and for oppression, and for violence to do *it*. 18. Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, They shall not lament for him, *saying*, Ah my brother, or, ah sister: they shall not lament for him, *saying*, Ah lord, or ah his glory. 19. He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem.

Kings, though they are gods to us, they are men to God, and ſhall *die like men*, ſo it appears in thoſe verſes, where we have a ſentence of death paſt upon two kings that reigned ſucceſſively in Jeruſalem, two brothers, and both the ungracious ſons of a very pious father.

1. Here is the doom of Shallum, who doubtleſs is the ſame with Jehoahaz, for he is that ſon of Joſiah, king of Judah, who reigned *in the ſtead of Joſiah his father*, ver. 11. which Jehoahaz did by the act of the people who made him king, though he was not the eldeſt ſon, 2 *Kings* xxiii. 30. 2 *Chron.* xxxvi. 1. Among the ſons of Joſiah, 1 *Chron.* iii. 15. there is one Shallum mentioned, and not Jehoahaz. Perhaps the people preferred him before his elder brother, becauſe they thought him a more active daring young man and fitter to rule: but God ſoon ſhewed them the folly of their injuſtice, and that it could not proſper, for within three months the king of Egypt came upon him, depoſed him, and carried him away priſoner into Egypt, as God had threatned, *Deut.* xxviii. 68. It doth not appear that any of the people were taken into captivity with him, but himſelf only. We have the ſtory, 2 *Kings* xxiii. 34. 2 *Chron.* xxxvi. 4. Now here,

(1.) The people are directed to lament him rather than his father Joſiah, *weep not for the dead*, weep not any more for Joſiah; Jeremiah had been himſelf a true mourner for him, and had ſtirred up the people to mourn for him, 2 *Chron.* xxxv. 25. yet now he will have them go out of mourning for him, though it was but three months after his death, and to turn their tears into another chanel, they muſt weep ſore for Jehoahaz that is gone into Egypt, not that there was any great loſs of him to the publick, as there was of his father, but that his caſe was much more deplorable. Joſiah went to the grave in peace and honour, was prevented from ſeeing the evil to come in this world, and removed to ſee the good to come in the other world; and therefore *weep not for him*, but for his unhappy ſon, that is likely to live and die in diſgrace and miſery, a wretched captive. Note, Dying ſaints may be juſtly envied, whilſt living ſinners are juſtly pitied. And ſo diſmal, perhaps, the proſpect of the times may be, that tears, even for a Joſiah, even for a Jeſus, muſt be reſtrained, that they may be reſerved for *ourſelves and our children*, Luk. xxiii. 28.

(2.) The reaſon given is, becauſe he ſhall never return out of captivity, as he and his people expected, but ſhall die there. They were loth to believe this, therefore it is repeated here again and again, he ſhall *return no more*, ver. 10. He ſhall never have the pleaſure of ſeeing *his native country*, but ſhall have the continual grief of hearing of the deſolations of it. He is gone *forth out of this place*, and ſhall *never return*, ver. 11. *He ſhall die in the place whither they have led him captive*, ver. 12. This came of his forſaking the good example of his father, and uſurping the right of his elder brother. In Ezekiel's lamentation for the princes of Iſrael, this Jehoahaz is repreſented as a young lion that ſoon learned to *catch the prey*, but was taken, and brought in chains to Egypt, and was long expected to return, but in vain. See *Ezek* xix. 3, 4, 5.

2. Here is the doom of Jehoiakim who ſucceeded him. Whether he had any better right to the crown than Shallum we know not; for though he was elder than his predeceſſor, there ſeems to be another ſon of Joſiah elder than he, called Johanan, 1 *Chron.* iii. 15. But this we know, he ruled no better, and fared no better at laſt. Here is,

1. His ſins faithfully reproved. It is not fit for a private perſon to ſay to a king, *Thou art wicked*, but a prophet that has a meſſage from God, betrays his truſt if he do not deliver it, be it never ſo unpleaſing, even to kings themſelves. Jehoiakim is not here charged with idolatry; and probably, he had not yet put Urijah the prophet to death, as we find afterwards he did, *chap.* xxvi. 22, 23. for then he would have been told of it here: But the crimes for which he is here reproved, are, (1.) Pride and affectation of pomp and ſplendor; as if all the buſineſs of a king were to look great, and to do good were to be the leaſt of his care. He muſt build him a ſtately palace, a *wide houſe*, and *large chambers*, ver. 14. He muſt have *windows cut out* after the neweſt faſhion, perhaps like faſh-windows with us. The rooms muſt be *cieled with cedar*, the richeſt ſort of wood. His houſe muſt be as well roofed and wainſcotted as the temple itſelf, or elſe it will not pleaſe him, 1 *Kings* vi. 15. 16. Nay, it muſt exceed that, for it muſt be painted with *minium*, or *vermilion*, which dies red, or, as ſome read it, with *indigo*, which dies blue. No doubt, it is lawful for princes and great men to build, and beautify, and furniſh their houſes, ſo as is agreeable to their dignity; but he that knows what is in man, knew that Jehoiakim did this in the pride of his heart, which makes that to be ſinful, exceeding ſinful, which is in itſelf lawful. Thoſe therefore that are enlarging their houſes, and making them more ſumptuous, have need to look well to the frame of their own ſpirits in the doing of it, and carefully to watch againſt all the workings of vain-glory. But that which was particularly amiſs in Jehoiakim's caſe, was, that he did this when he could not but perceive both by the word of God, and by his providence, that divine judgments were breaking in upon him. He reigned his three firſt years by the permiſſion and allowance of the king of Egypt, and all the reſt by the permiſſion and allowance of the king of Babylon; and yet he that was no better than a viceroy, will covet to vie with the greateſt monarchs in building and furniture. Obſerve how peremptory he is in this reſolution, *I will build me a wide houſe*, I am reſolved *I will*, whoever adviſes me to the contrary. Note, It is the common folly of thoſe that are ſinking in their eſtates, to covet to make a fair ſhew. Many have unhumbled hearts under humbling providences; and look moſt haughty then when God is bringing them down. This is ſtriving with our Maker. (2.) Carnal ſecurity, and confidence in his wealth, depending upon the continuance of his proſperity, as if his mountain now ſtood ſo ſtrong that it could never be moved. He thought he muſt reign without any diſturbance or interruption, becauſe he had *cloſed himſelf in cedar*, ver. 15. as if that were too fine to be aſſaulted, and too ſtrong to be broken through; and as if God himſelf could not for pity give up ſuch a ſtately houſe as that to be burned. Thus when Chriſt ſpoke of the deſtruction of the temple, his diſciples came to him to ſhew him what a magnificent ſtructure it was, *Mat.* xxiii. 38. and xxiv. 1. Note, Thoſe wretchedly deceive themſelves, that think their preſent proſperity is a laſting ſecurity, and dream of reigning, becauſe they are *incloſed in cedar*. It is but in his own conceit that the rich man's wealth is his ſtrong city. (3.) Some think he is here charged with ſacrilege, and robbing the houſe of God to beautify and adorn his own houſe. He *cuts him out* my *windows*, ſo it is in the margin; which ſome underſtand as if he had taken windows out of the temple, to put into his own palace, and then *painted them* (as it follows) *with vermilion*, that it might not be diſcovered, but might look of a piece with his own building. Note, Thoſe cheat themſelves, and ruin themſelves at laſt, that think to enrich themſelves by robbing God, and his houſe; and however they may diſguiſe it, God diſcovers it. (4.) He is here charged with extortion and oppreſſion, violence and injuſtice. He *built his houſe by unrighteouſneſs*, i. e. with money unjuſtly got, and materials which were not honeſtly come by, and perhaps upon ground obtained, as Ahab obtained Naboth's vineyard. And becauſe he went beyond what he could afford, he defrauded his workmen of their wages, which is one of the ſins that *cries in the ears of the Lord of hoſts*, James v. 4. God takes notice of the wrong done by the greateſt of men to their poor ſervants and labourers, and will repay them in juſtice that will not in juſtice pay thoſe whom they employ, but *uſe their neighbour's ſervice without wages*. Obſerve, The greateſt of men muſt look upon the meaneſt as their neighbours, and be juſt to them accordingly, and love them as themſelves. Jehoiakim was oppreſſive, not only in his buildings, but in the adminiſtration of his government. He did not do juſtice, made no conſcience of ſhedding innocent blood, when it was to ſerve the purpoſes of his ambition, avarice and revenge. He was all for *oppreſſion* and *violence*; not to threaten it only, but to do it; and when he was ſet upon any act of injuſtice, nothing ſhould ſtop him, but he would go through with it. And that which was at the bottom of all was covetouſneſs, that love of *money which is the root of all evil. Thine eyes and thine heart are not but for covetouſneſs*; they were for that, and nothing elſe. Obſerve, In *covetouſneſs* the heart walks after the eyes: it is therefore called *the luſt of the eye*, 1 John ii. 15. Job xxxi. 7. It is *ſetting the eyes upon that which is not*, Prov. xxiii. 5. The *eyes* and the *heart* are then for *covetouſneſs*, when the aims and affections are wholly ſet upon the wealth of this world; and where they are ſo, the temptation is ſtrong to murther, oppreſſion, and all manner of violence and villainy. (5.) That which aggravated all his ſins was, that he was the ſon of a good father, that had left him a good example, if he would but have followed it, *ver.* 15, 16. *Did not thy father eat and drink?* When Jehoiakim enlarged and enlightened his houſe, it it probable he ſpoke ſcornfully of his father, for contenting himſelf with ſuch a mean and inconvenient dwelling, below the grandeur of a ſovereign prince, and ridiculed him as one that had a dull fancy, a low ſpirit, and could not find in his heart to lay out his money, nor cared for what was faſhionable: That ſhould not ſerve him that ſerved his father: But God, by the prophet, tells him that his father, though he had not the ſpirit of building, was a man of an excellent ſpirit, a better man than he, and did better for himſelf and his family. Thoſe children that deſpiſe their parents old faſhions, commonly come ſhort of their real excellencies. Jeremiah tells him,

(1.) That he was directed to do his duty by his father's practice. He *did judgment and juſtice*; he never did wrong to any of his ſubjects, never oppreſſed them, or put any hardſhip upon them, but was careful to preſerve all their juſt rights and properties: Nay, he not only did not abuſe his power for the ſupport of wrong, but he uſed it for the maintaining of right: He *judged the cauſe of the poor and needy*, was ready to hear the cauſe of the meaneſt of his ſubjects, and do them juſtice. Note, The care of magiſtrates muſt be not to ſupport their grandeur, and take their eaſe, but to do good; not only not to oppreſs the poor themſelves, but to defend thoſe that are oppreſſed.

(2.) That he was encouraged to do his duty by his father's proſperity. 1. God accepted him. *Was not this to know me, ſaith the Lord?* Did he not hereby make it to appear that he rightly knew his God and worſhipped him, and conſequently was known and owned of him. Note, The right knowledge of God conſiſts in doing our duty, particularly that which is the duty of our place and ſtation in the world. 2. He himſelf had the comfort of it. *Did he not eat and drink* ſoberly and chearfully, ſo as to fit himſelf for his buſineſs, *for ſtrength and not for drunkenneſs*, Eccl. x. 17.

x. 17. he did *eat, and drink, and do judgment*, not (as, perhaps, Jehoiakim and his princes did) *drink and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of the afflicted*, Prov. xxxi. 5. He did *eat and drink*, i. e. God bleſſed him with great plenty, and he had the comfortable enjoyment of it himſelf, and gave handſome entertainments to his friends, was very hoſpitable and very charitable. It was Jehoiakim's pride that he had built a fine houſe, but Joſiah's true praiſe that he kept a good houſe. Many times thoſe have leaſt in them of true generoſity, that have the greateſt affection for pomp and grandeur; for to ſupport the extravagant expence of that, hoſpitality, bounty to the poor, yea, and juſtice itſelf, will be pinched. It is better live with Joſiah in an old-faſhioned houſe, and do good, than live with Jehoiakim in a ſtately houſe, and leave debts unpaid. Joſiah did *juſtice and judgment*, and then *it was well with him*, ver. 15. and it is repeated again, *ver.* 16. He lived very comfortably, his own ſubjects and all his neighbours reſpected him; and whatever he put his hand to proſpered. Note, While we do well we may expect it will be well with us. This Jehoiakim knew, that his father found the way of duty to be the way of comfort, and yet would not tread in his ſteps.

Note, It ſhould engage us to keep up religion in our day, that our godly parents kept it up in theirs, and recommended it to us from their own experience of the benefit of it. They told us, that they had found the promiſes which godlineſs has of the *life that now is*, made good to them, and that religion and piety is a friend to outward proſperity. So that we are inexcuſable, if we turn aſide from that good way.

2. Here we have Jehoiakim's doom faithfully read, *ver.* 18, 19. We may ſuppoſe it was in the utmoſt peril of his own life, that Jeremiah here foretold the ſhameful death of Jehoiakim, but, *Thus ſaith the Lord concerning* him, and therefore thus ſaith he: (1.) He ſhall die unlamented: he ſhall make him ſo odious by his oppreſſion and cruelty, that all about him ſhall be glad to part with him, and none ſhall do him the honour of dropping one tear for him; whereas his father, who *did judgment and juſtice*, was univerſally lamented: and it is promiſed to Zedekiah, that he ſhould be lamented at his death, for he carried himſelf better than Jehoiakim had done, *chap.* xxxiv. 5. His relations ſhall not *lament him*, no, not with the common expreſſions of grief uſed at the funeral of the meaneſt, where they cried, *Ah my brother*, or, *Ah ſiſter*: his ſubjects ſhall not lament him, nor cry out as they uſed to do at the graves of their princes, *Ah lord, or, ah his glory.* It is ſad for any to live ſo, that when they die none will be ſorry to part with them. Nay, (2.) He ſhall *lie unburied*: this is worſe than the former. Even thoſe that have no tears to grace the funerals of the dead with, would willingly have them buried out of their ſight; but Jehoiakim ſhall be *buried with the burial of an aſs*, i. e. he ſhall have no burial at all, but his dead body ſhall be caſt into a ditch, or upon a dunghil: it ſhall be *drawn*, or dragged ignominiouſly, and *caſt forth beyond the gates of Jeruſalem.* It is ſaid in the ſtory of Jehoiakim, 2 *Chron.* xxxvi. 6. that Nebuchadnezzar *bound him in fetters to carry him to Babylon*, and *Ezek.* xix. 9. that he was *brought in chains to the king of Babylon.* But it is probable he died a priſoner before he was carried away to Babylon, as was intended; perhaps died for grief, or in the pride of his heart haſtened his own end, and for that reaſon was denied a decent burial, as ſelf-murtherers uſually are with us. Joſephus ſaith that Nebuchadnezzar ſlew him at Jeruſalem, and left his body thus expoſed, ſomewhere at a great diſtance from the *gates of Jeruſalem.* And it is ſaid, 2 *Kings* xxiv. 6. he *ſlept with his fathers.* When he built himſelf a ſtately houſe, no doubt, he deſigned himſelf a ſtately ſepulchre, but ſee how he was diſappointed. Note, Thoſe that are lifted up with great pride, are commonly reſerved for ſome great diſgrace, in life or death.

20. ¶ Go up to Lebanon, and cry, and lift up thy voice in Baſhan, and cry from the paſſages: for all thy lovers are deſtroyed. 21. I ſpake unto thee in thy proſperity, *but* thou ſaidſt, I will not hear: this *hath been* thy manner from thy youth, that thou obeyedſt not my voice. 22. The wind ſhall eat up all thy paſtors, and thy lovers ſhall go into captivity, ſurely then ſhalt thou be aſhamed and confounded for all thy wickedneſs. 23. O inhabitant of Lebanon, that makeſt thy neſt in the cedars, how gracious ſhalt thou be when pangs come upon thee, the pain as of a woman in travail? 24. *As* I live, ſaith the LORD, though Coniah the ſon of Jehoiakim king of Judah were the ſignet upon my right hand, yet would I pluck thee thence, 25. And I will give thee into the hand of them that ſeek thy life, and into the hand *of them* whoſe face thou feareſt, even into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of the Chaldeans. 26. And I will caſt thee out, and thy mother that bare thee, into another country, where ye were not born, and there ſhall ye die. 27. But to the land whereunto they deſire to return, thither ſhall they not return. 28. *Is* this man Coniah a deſpiſed broken idol? *is he* a veſſel wherein *is* no pleaſure? wherefore are they caſt out, he and his ſeed, and are caſt into a land which they know not? 29. O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD. 30. Thus ſaith the LORD, Write ye this man childleſs, a man *that* ſhall not proſper in his days: for no man of his ſeed ſhall proſper, ſitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah.

This propheſy ſeems to have been calculated for the ungracious, inglorious reign of Jeconiah, or Jehoiakin the ſon of Jehoiakim, who ſucceeded him in the government, reigned but three months, and was then carried captive to Babylon, where he lived many years, *Jer.* lii. 31. We have in theſe verſes a prophecy,

1. Of the deſolations of the kingdom, which were now haſtening on apace, *ver.* 20—23. Jeruſalem and Judah are here ſpoken to, or the Jewiſh ſtate as a ſingle perſon, and we have it here under a threefold character.

(1.) Very haughty in a day of peace and ſafety, *ver.* 21. *I ſpake unto thee in thy proſperity*; ſpake by my ſervants the prophets reproofs, admonitions, counſels, *but thou ſaidſt, I will not hear*, I will not heed, *thou obeyedſt not my voice*, and waſt reſolved thou wouldſt not, and had the front to tell me ſo. It is common for thoſe that live at eaſe, to live in contempt of the word of God. *Jeſhurun waxed fat, and kicked.* This is ſo much the worſe that they had it by kind; *this has been thy manner from thy youth.* They were called *tranſgreſſors from the womb*, Iſa. xlix. 8.

(2.) Very timorous upon the alarms of trouble, *ver.* 20. When thou ſeeſt *all thy lovers deſtroyed*, when thou findeſt thine idols unable to help thee, and thy foreign alliances failing thee, thou wilt then go up to Lebanon, and cry, as one undone, and giving up all for loſt, cry with a bitter cry; thou wilt cry, help, help, or we are loſt; thou will *lift up thy voice* in fearful ſhrieks, upon *Lebanon* and *Baſhan*, two high hills, in hope to be heard from thence by the advantage of the riſing ground. Thou wilt *cry from the paſſages*, from the roads, where thou wilt ever and anon be in diſtreſs. Thou wilt cry from *Abarim*, ſo ſome read it, as a proper name, a famous mountain in the border of Moab. Thou wilt cry as thoſe that are in great conſternation uſe to do, to all about thee, but in vain, for *ver.* 22. *the wind ſhall eat up all thy paſtors* or *rulers*, that ſhould protect and lead thee, and provide for thy ſafety: they ſhall be blaſted and withered, and brought to nothing, as buds and bloſſoms are by a bleak or freezing wind: They ſhall be devoured ſuddenly, inſenſibly, and irreſiſtibly, as fruits by the wind. *Thy lovers*, that thou dependeſt upon, and haſt an affection for, ſhall *go into captivity*; and ſhall be ſo far from ſaving thee, that they ſhall not be able to ſave themſelves.

(3.) Very tame under the heavy and laſting preſſures of trouble. When there appears no relief from any of thy confederates, and thy own prieſts are at a loſs, *then ſhalt thou be aſhamed and confounded for all thy wickedneſs*, ver. 22. Note, Many will never be aſhamed of their ſins, till they are brought by them to the laſt extremity; and it is well if we get this good by our ſtraits, by them to be brought to confuſion for our ſins. The Jewiſh ſtate is here called *an inhabitant of Lebanon*, becauſe that famous foreſt was within their border, *ver.* 23. and all their country was wealthy and well-guarded, as with Lebanon's natural faſtneſſes; but ſo proud and haughty were they, that they are ſaid to *make their neſt in the cedars*, where they thought themſelves out of the reach of all danger, and whence they looked with contempt upon all about them. But, *how gracious wilt thou be when pangs come upon thee?* Then thou wilt humble thyſelf before God, and promiſe amendment. When thou art overthrown in ſtony places, thou wilt be glad to *hear thoſe words* which in thy proſperity *thou wouldſt not hear*, Pſal. cxli. 6. Then thou wilt endeavour to make thyſelf acceptable with that God whom before thou madeſt light of. Note, Many have their pangs of piety, who, when the pangs are over, ſhew they have no true piety. Some give another ſenſe of it: What will all thy pomp, and ſtate, and wealth avail thee? What will become of it all, or what comfort ſhalt thou have of it, when thou ſhalt be in theſe diſtreſſes? No more than *a woman in travail*, full of pains and fears, can take comfort in her ornaments while ſhe is in that condition. So Mr. Gataker. Note, Thoſe that are proud of their wordly advantages, would do well to conſider, how they will look when pangs come upon them, and how they will then have loſt all their beauty.

2. Here is a prophecy of the diſgrace of the king: His name was Jeconiah, but he is here once and again called Coniah, in contempt. The prophet ſhortens or nicks his name, and gives him, as we ſay, a nick-name, perhaps to note, that he ſhould be deſpoiled of his dignity, that his reign ſhould be ſhortened, and the number of his months cut off in the midſt. Two inſtances of diſhonour are here put upon him.

1. He ſhall be carried away *into captivity*, and ſhall ſpend and end his days in bondage. He was born to a crown, but it ſhould quickly fall from his head, and he ſhould exchange it for fetters. Obſerve the ſteps of this judgment.

(1.) God will abandon him, *ver.* 24. The God of truth ſaith it, and confirms it with an oath; *though he were the ſignet upon my right*

right hand, his predeceſſors have been ſo, and he might have been ſo, if he had carried himſelf well; but he being degenerated *I will pluck him thence*. The godly kings of Judah had been as ſignets on God's right hand, near and dear to him; he had gloried in them, and made uſe of them as inſtruments of his government, as the prince doth of his ſignet ring, or ſign manual; but Coniah has made himſelf utterly unworthy of the honour, and therefore the privilege of his birth ſhall be no ſecurity to him; notwithſtanding that he ſhall be thrown off. Anſwerable to this threatning againſt Jeconiah is God's promiſe to Zerubbabel, when he made him his people's guide in their return out of captivity, *Hag.* ii. 23. *I will take thee, O Zerubbabel, my ſervant, and make thee as a ſignet.* Thoſe that think themſelves as ſignets on God's right hand, muſt not be ſecure, but fear leſt they be plucked thence.

(2.) The king of Babylon ſhall ſeize him. Thoſe know not what enemies and miſchiefs they lie expoſed to, who have thrown themſelves out of God's protection, *ver.* 25. The Chaldeans are here ſaid to be ſuch as had a ſpite to *Coniah*, they *ſought his life*; no leſs than that they thought would ſatisfy their rage: and ſuch as he had a dread of, they are thoſe *whoſe face thou feareſt*, which would make it the more terrible to him to fall into their hands, eſpecially when it was God himſelf that gave *him into their hands*. And if God deliver him to them, who can deliver him from them?

(3.) He and his family ſhall be carried to Babylon, where they ſhall wear out the many tedious years of their lives in a miſerable captivity; *he and his mother*, ver. 26. *he and his ſeed*, ver. 28. *i. e.* he and all the royal family; for he had no children of his own when he went into captivity; or, he and the children in his loins; they ſhall all be caſt out to another country, to a ſtrange country, *a county where they were not born*, nor ſuch a country as that where they were born, *a land which they know not*, in which they have no acquaintance, with whom to converſe, or from whom to expect any kindneſs. Thither they ſhall be carried, from a land where they were entitled to dominion, into a land where they ſhall be compelled to ſervitude. But have they no hopes of ſeeing their own country again? No, *To the land whereunto they deſire to return, thither ſhall they not return*, ver. 27. They carried themſelves ill in it, when they were in it, and therefore they ſhall never ſee it more. Jehoahaz was carried to Egypt, the land of the ſouth, *ver.* 10. Jeconiah to Babylon, the land of the north, both far remote the quite contrary way, and muſt never expect to meet again, nor either of them to breathe their native air again. Thoſe that had abuſed the dominion they had over others, were juſtly brought thus under the dominion of others. Thoſe that had indulged and gratified their ſinful deſires, by their oppreſſion, luxury, and cruelty, were juſtly denied the gratification of their innocent deſire, to ſee their own native country again. We may obſerve ſomething very emphatical in that part of this threatning, *ver.* 26, *In the country where ye were not born, there ſhall ye die.* As there is a *time to be born*, and a *time to die*, ſo there is a place to be born in, and a place to die in. We know where we were born, but where we ſhall die we know not; it is enough that our God knows. Let it be our care that we die in Chriſt, and then it will be well with us wherever we die, though it ſhould be in a far country.

(4.) This ſhall render him very mean and deſpicable in the eyes of all his neighbours. They ſhall be ready to ſay, *ver.* 28. *Is this Coniah a deſpiſed broken idol?* Yes, certainly he is, and much debaſed from what he was. (1.) Time was when he was dignified, nay, when he was almoſt deified. The people, who had ſeen his father lately depoſed, were ready to adore him when they ſaw him upon the throne; but now *he is a deſpiſed broken idol*, that when it was whole was worſhipped, but when it is rotten and broken it is thrown by and *deſpiſed*, and no body regards it, or remembers what it has been. Note, What is idolized, will firſt or laſt be *deſpiſed* and *broken*; what is unjuſtly honoured, will be juſtly contemned, and rivals with God will be the ſcorn of man. Whatever we idolize, we ſhall be diſappointed in, and then ſhall *deſpiſe*. (2.) Time was when he was delighted in, but now he is *a veſſel in which is no pleaſure*, or to which there is no deſire, either becauſe grown out of faſhion, or becauſe cracked or dirtied, and ſo rendered unſerviceable. Thoſe whom God has no pleaſure in, will ſometime or other be ſo mortified, that men will have no pleaſure in them.

2. He ſhall leave no poſterity to inherit his honour. The prediction of this is uſhered in with a ſolemn preface, *ver.* 29. *O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord.* Let all the inhabitants of the world take notice of theſe judgments of God upon a nation and a family that had been near and dear to him, and from thence infer, that God is impartial in the adminiſtration of juſtice. Or, it is an appeal to the earth itſelf on which we tread, ſince thoſe that dwell on earth are ſo deaf and careleſs, like that, *Iſa.* i. 2. *Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth.* God's word, however ſlighted, will be heard; the earth itſelf will be made to hear it, and yield to it, when it, and all the works therein, ſhall be burnt up. Or, It is a call to men that *mind earthly things*, that are ſwallowed up in thoſe things, and are inordinate in the purſuit of them; ſuch have need to be called upon again and again, and a third time, to *hear the word of the Lord.* Or, It is a call to men, conſidered as mortal, of the earth, and haſtening to the earth again; we all are ſo, earth we are, *duſt we are*, and in conſideration of that, are concerned to hear and regard *the word of the Lord*, that though we are earth, we may be found among thoſe whoſe names are written in heaven.

Now that which is here to be taken notice of, is, that Jeconiah is *written childleſs*, ver. 30. that is, as it follows, *no man of his ſeed ſhall proſper, ſitting upon the throne of David.* In him the line of David was extinct as a royal line. Some think he had children born in Babylon, becauſe mention is made of his ſeed being caſt out there, *ver.* 28. and that they died before him. We read in the genealogy, 1 *Chron.* iii. 17. of ſeven ſons of Jeconiah Aſſir, *i. e.* Jeconiah the captive, of which Salathiel is the firſt. Some think they were only his adopted ſons, and that when it is ſaid, *Mat.* i. 12. *Jeconiah begat Salathiel*, no more is meant but that he bequeathed to him what claims and pretenſions he had to the government; the rather, becauſe Salathiel is called the ſon of Neri, *Luke* iii. 27. of *the houſe of Nathan*, ver. 31. Whether he had children begotten, or only adopted, thus far he was *childleſs*, that *none of his ſeed* ruled as kings in Judah. He was the Auguſtulus of that empire, in whom it determined. Whoever are childleſs, it is God that writes them ſo; and thoſe who take no care to do good in their days, cannot expect to *proſper in their days*.

CHAP. XXIII.

In this chapter the prophet, in God's name, is dealing his reproofs and threatnings, (1.) Among the careleſs princes, or paſtors of the people, ver. 1, 2. *yet promiſing to take care of the flock, which they had been wanting in their duty to*, ver. 3,—8. *(2.) Among the wicked prophets and prieſts, whoſe ill character is here given at large in divers inſtances, eſpecially their impoſing upon the people with their pretended inſpirations, at which the prophet is aſtoniſhed, and for which they muſt expect to be puniſhed*, ver. 9,—32. *(3.) Among the profane people, who ridiculed God's prophets, and bantered them*, ver. 33,—40. *When all have thus corrupted their way, they muſt all expect to be told faithfully of it.*

WO be unto the paſtors that deſtroy and ſcatter the ſheep of my paſture, ſaith the LORD. 2. Therefore thus ſaith the LORD God of Iſrael againſt the paſtors that feed my people, Ye have ſcattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not viſited them; behold, I will viſit upon you the evil of your doings, ſaith the LORD. 3. And I will gather the remnant of my flock, out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds, and they ſhall be fruitful and increaſe. 4. And I will ſet up ſhepherds over them, which ſhall feed them, and they ſhall fear no more, nor be diſmayed, neither ſhall they be lacking, ſaith the LORD. 5. ¶ Behold, the days come, ſaith the LORD, that I will raiſe unto David a righteous branch, and a king ſhall reign and proſper, and ſhall execute juſtice and judgment in the earth. 6. In his days Judah ſhall be ſaved, and Iſrael ſhall dwell ſafely: and this *is* his name whereby he ſhall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. 7. Therefore behold, the days come, ſaith the LORD, that they ſhall no more ſay, The LORD liveth which brought up the children of Iſrael out of the land of Egypt: 8. But, The LORD liveth, which brought up, and which led the ſeed of the houſe of Iſrael out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them, and they ſhall dwell in their own land.

Here is, 1. A word of terror to the negligent ſhepherds; the day is at hand when God will reckon with them concerning the truſt and charge committed to them, *Wo be to the paſtors*, i. e. to the *rulers*, both in church and ſtate, who ſhould be to thoſe they are ſet over as paſtors to lead them, feed them, protect them, and take care of them. They are not owners of the ſheep; God here calls them *the ſheep of my paſture*, whom I am intereſted in, and have provided good paſture for; *Wo be* to thoſe therefore that are commanded to *feed* God's people, and pretend to do it; but inſtead of that they *ſcatter the flock*, and *drive them away* by their violence and oppreſſion, and *have not viſited them*, nor taken any care for their welfare, nor concerned themſelves at all to do them good. In *not viſiting* them, and doing their duty to them, they did in effect *ſcatter* them, and *drive them away*. The beaſts of prey ſcattered them, and the ſhepherds are in the fault, that ſhould have kept them together. *Wo be to them*, when God will *viſit upon* them *the evil of* their *doings*, and deal with them as they deſerve. They would not viſit the flock in a way of duty, and therefore God will viſit them in a way of vengeance.

2. Here is a word of comfort to the neglected ſheep. Though the under-ſhepherds take no care of them, no pains with them, but betray them, the chief Shepherd will look after them; *When my father and my mother forſaketh me, then the Lord taketh me up.* Though the intereſts of God's church in the world are neglected by

by thoſe who ſhould take care of them, and poſtponed to their own private ſecular intereſts, yet they ſhall not therefore ſink. God will perform his promiſe, though thoſe he employs do not perform their duty.

1. The diſperſed Jews ſhall at length return to their own land, and be happily ſettled there under a good government, *ver.* 3, 4. Though there be but a remnant of God's flock left, a little remnant, that has narrowly eſcaped deſtruction, he will gather that remnant; will find them out wherever they are, and find out ways and means to bring them back *out of all countries whither I have driven them.* It was the juſtice of God for the ſin of their ſhepherds that God diſperſed them, but the mercy of God ſhall gather in the ſheep, when the ſhepherds that betrayed them are cut off. *They ſhall be brought* to their former habitations, as ſheep to their folds, and there they ſhall be *fruitful and increaſe* in numbers. And though their former ſhepherds took no care of them, it doth not therefore follow that they ſhall have no more: If ſome have abuſed a ſacred office, that is no good reaſon why it ſhould be depoſed: they deſtroyed the ſheep, but I will ſet ſhepherds over them which ſhall make it their buſineſs to feed them. Formerly they were continually expoſed and diſturbed with ſome alarm or other; but now *they ſhall fear no more, nor be diſmayed:* they ſhall be in no danger from without, in no fright from within. Formerly ſome or other of them were ever and anon picked up by the beaſts of prey, but now *none of them ſhall be lacking*, none of them miſſing. Though the times may have been long bad with the church, it doth not follow, that they will be ever ſo. Such paſtors as Zerubbabel and Nehemiah were, though they lived not in the pomp that Jehoiakim and Jeconiah did, nor made ſuch a figure, were as great bleſſings to the people as the others were plagues to them. The church's peace is not bound up in the pomp of her rulers.

2. Meſſiah the Prince, that great and good Shepherd of the ſheep, ſhall in the latter days be raiſed up to bleſs his church, and to be the glory of his people Iſrael, *ver.* 5, 6. The houſe of David ſeemed to be quite ſunk and ruined by that threatning againſt Jeconiah, *chap.* xxii. 30. that none of his ſeed ſhould ever *ſit upon the throne of David*; but here is a promiſe which effectually ſecures the honour of the covenant made with *David* notwithſtanding; for by it the houſe will be raiſed out of its ruins to a greater luſtre than ever, and ſhine brighter far than it did in Solomon himſelf. We have not ſo many prophecies of Chriſt in this book as we had in that of the prophet *Iſaiah*; but here we have one, and a very illuſtrious one; of him doubtleſs the prophet here ſpeaks, of him and of no other man. The firſt words intimate, that it would be long ere this promiſe ſhould have its accompliſhment; *The days come*; but they are not yet; I ſhall ſee him, but not now; but all the reſt intimate, that the accompliſhment of them will be glorious.

(1.) Chriſt is here ſpoken of as a *branch from David*, the *Man the Branch*, Zech. iii. 8. His appearance mean, his beginnings ſmall, like thoſe of a bud or ſprout, and his riſe ſeemingly out of the earth, but growing to be green, to be great, to be loaded with fruits. A branch from David's family, when it ſeemed to be a *root in a dry ground*, buried, and not likely to revive. Chriſt is the *root and offspring of David*, Rev. xxii. 16. In him doth the *horn of David bud*, Pſal. cxxxii. 17, 18. He is a branch of God's raiſing up, he ſanctified him, and ſent him into the world, gave him his commiſſion and qualifications. He is a righteous branch, for he is righteous himſelf, and through him many, even all that are his, are made righteous; as an advocate, he is *Jeſus Chriſt the righteous.*

(2.) He is here ſpoken of as his church's King. This branch ſhall be raiſed as high as the throne of his father David, and there *he ſhall reign and proſper*, not as the kings that now were of the houſe of *David*, that went backward in all their affairs; no, he ſhall ſet up a kingdom in the world, that ſhall be victorious over all oppoſition. In the chariot of the everlaſting goſpel he ſhall go forth, he ſhall go on *conquering and to conquer.* If God *raiſe him up*, he will *proſper* him, for he will own the work of his own hands; what is *the good pleaſure of the Lord* ſhall *proſper in the hands* of thoſe to whom it is committed. He ſhall *proſper*, for *he ſhall execute judgment and juſtice in the earth*, all the world over, *Pſal.* xcvi. 13. The preſent kings of the houſe of David were unjuſt and oppreſſive, and therefore no wonder they did not proſper; but Chriſt ſhall, by his goſpel, break the uſurped power of Satan, inſtitute a perfect rule of holy living, and, as far as it prevails, make all the world righteous. The effect of this ſhall be a holy ſecurity and ſerenity of mind in all his faithful loyal ſubjects. *In his days*, under his dominion, *Judah ſhall be ſaved, and Iſrael ſhall dwell ſafely*, i. e. all the ſpiritual ſeed of believing Abraham, and praying *Jacob*, ſhall be protected from the curſe of heaven, and the malice of hell; ſhall be privileged from the arreſts of God's law, and delivered from the attempts of Satan's power; ſhall be ſaved from ſin, the guilt and dominion of it, and then ſhall *dwell ſafely*, and be quiet from the fear of all evil. See *Luke* i. 74, 75. Thoſe that ſhall be ſaved hereafter from the wrath to come, may *dwell ſafely* now; for *if God be for us, who can be againſt us?* In the days of Chriſt's government in the ſoul, when he is uppermoſt there, the ſoul *dwells at eaſe.*

(3.) He is here ſpoken of as *The Lord our righteouſneſs.* Obſerve, (1.) Who and what he is: As God he is Jehovah, the incommunicable name of God ſpeaking his eternity and ſelf-exiſtence: As Mediator, he is *our righteouſneſs*, by making ſatisfaction to the juſtice of God for the ſin of man, he has brought in an everlaſting righteouſneſs, and ſo made it over to us in the covenant of grace, that upon our believing conſent to that covenant, it becomes ours. His being *Jehovah our righteouſneſs* implies, that he is ſo *our righteouſneſs* as no creature could be: He is a ſovereign, all-ſufficient, eternal righteouſneſs: All our righteouſneſs has its being from him, and by him it ſubſiſts; and we are made the righteouſneſs of God in him. (2.) The profeſſion and declaration of this, *This is the name whereby he ſhall be called*; not only he ſhall be ſo, but he ſhall be known to be ſo. God ſhall call him by this name, for he ſhall appoint him to be *our righteouſneſs.* By this name Iſrael ſhall call him; every true believer ſhall call him, and call upon him. That is *our righteouſneſs*, by which; as an allowed plea, we are juſtified before God, acquitted from guilt; and accepted into favour; and nothing elſe have we to plead but this, "Chriſt has died, yea, "rather is riſen again," and we have taken him for our Lord.

3. This great ſalvation which will come to the Jews in the latter days of their ſtate, after their return out of Babylon, ſhall be ſo illuſtrious, as far to outſhine the deliverance of Iſrael out of Egypt; *ver.* 7, 8. *They ſhall no more ſay the Lord liveth that brought up Iſrael out of Egypt, but, The Lord liveth that brought them up out of the north.* This we had before, *chap.* xvi. 14, 15. But here it ſeems to point more plainly than it did there to the days of the Meſſiah, and to compare not ſo much the two deliverances themſelves; giving the preference to the latter, as the two ſtates to which the church by degrees grew after thoſe deliverances. Obſerve the proportion: Juſt 480 years after they were come out of Egypt Solomon's temple was built, 1 *Kings* vi. 1. and at that time that nation, which was ſo wonderfully brought up out of Egypt, was gradually arrived to its height, to its zenith: Juſt 490 years (70 weeks) after they came out of Babylon, Meſſiah the Prince ſet up the goſpel-temple, which was the greateſt glory of that nation, that was ſo wonderfully brought out of Babylon; ſee *Dan.* ix. 24, 25. Now the ſpiritual glory of the ſecond part of that nation, eſpecially as tranſferred to the goſpel-church, is much more admirable and illuſtrious than all the temporal glory of the firſt part of it in the days of Solomon; for that was no glory, compared with the glory which excelleth.

9. ¶ Mine heart within me is broken, becauſe of the prophets, all my bones ſhake: I am like a drunken man, and like a man whom wine hath overcome; becauſe of the LORD, and becauſe of the words of his holineſs. 10. For the land is full of adulterers, for becauſe of ſwearing the land mourneth: the pleaſant places of the wilderneſs are dried up, and their courſe is evil, and their force *is* not right. 11. For both prophet and prieſt are profane, yea, in my houſe have I found their wickedneſs, ſaith the LORD. 12. Wherefore their way ſhall be unto them as ſlippery *ways* in the darkneſs: they ſhall be driven on and fall therein: for I will bring evil upon them, *even* the year of their viſitation, ſaith the LORD. 13. And I have ſeen folly in the prophets of Samaria, they propheſied in Baal, and cauſed my people Iſrael to err. 14. I have ſeen alſo in the prophets of Jeruſalem an horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies: they ſtrengthen alſo the hands of evil doers, that none doth return from his wickedneſs: they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah. 15. Therefore thus ſaith the LORD of hoſts concerning the prophets, Behold, I will feed them with wormwood, and make them drink the water of gall: for from the prophets of Jeruſalem is profaneneſs gone forth into all the land. 16. Thus ſaith the LORD of hoſts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that propheſy unto you; they make you vain: they ſpeak a viſion of their own heart, *and* not out of the mouth of the LORD. 17. They ſay ſtill unto them that deſpiſe me, The LORD hath ſaid, Ye ſhall have peace; and they ſay unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil ſhall come upon you. 18. For who hath ſtood in the counſel of the LORD, and hath perceived and heard his word? who hath marked his word and heard *it?* 19. Behold, a whirlwind of the LORD hath gone forth in fury, even a grievous whirlwind, it ſhall fall grievouſly upon the head of the wicked. 20. The anger of the LORD ſhall not return, until he have executed, and till he have performed the thoughts of his heart: in the latter days ye ſhall conſider it perfectly. 21. I have not ſent theſe prophets, yet they ran: I have not ſpoken to them, yet they propheſied. 22. But if they had ſtood in my counſel, and had cauſed

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my people to hear my words, then they ſhould have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings. 23. *Am* I a God at hand, ſaith the LORD, and not a God afar off? 24. Can any hide himſelf in ſecret places, that I ſhall not ſee him? ſaith the LORD: do not I fill heaven and earth? ſaith the LORD. 25. I have heard what the prophets ſaid, that propheſy lies in my name, ſaying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed. 26. How long ſhall *this* be in the heart of the prophets that propheſy lies? yea, *they are* prophets of the deceit of their own heart; 27. Which think to cauſe my people to forget my name by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbour, as their fathers have forgotten my name, for Baal. 28. The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him ſpeak my word faithfully: what *is* the chaff to the wheat? ſaith the LORD. 29. *Is* not my word like as a fire? ſaith the LORD: and like a hammer *that* breaketh the rock in pieces? 30. Therefore behold, I *am* againſt the prophets, ſaith the LORD, that ſteal my words, every one from his neighbour. 31. Behold, I *am* againſt the prophets, ſaith the LORD, that uſe their tongues, and ſay, He ſaith. 32. Behold, I *am* againſt them that propheſy falſe dreams, ſaith the LORD, and do tell them, and cauſe my people to err by their lies and by their lightneſs, yet I ſent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they ſhall not profit this people at all, ſaith the LORD.

Here is a long leſſon for the falſe prophets: As none were more bitter and ſpiteful againſt God's true prophets than they, ſo there were none on whom the true prophets were more ſevere; and juſtly. The prophet had complained to God of thoſe falſe prophets, *chap.* xiv. 13. and had often foretold that they ſhould be involved in the common ruin, but here they have woes of their own.

1. He expreſſeth the deep concern that he was under upon this account, and what a trouble it was to him to ſee men that pretended to a divine commiſſion and inſpiration, ruining themſelves and the people among whom they dwelt, by their falſhood and treachery, *ver.* 9. *My heart within me is broken, I am like a drunken man.* His head was in confuſion with wonder and aſtoniſhment, his heart was under oppreſſion with grief and vexation. Jeremiah was a man that laid things much to heart, and what was any way threatning to his country made a deep impreſſion upon his ſpirits. He is here in trouble, (1.) *Becauſe of the prophets*, and their ſin, the falſe doctine they preached, the wicked lives they lived; eſpecially it filled him with horror, to hear them making uſe of God's name, and pretending to have their inſtructions from him. Never was the Lord ſo abuſed, and *the words of his holineſs*, as by theſe men. Note, The diſhonour done to God's name, and the profanation of his holy word, is the greateſt grief imaginable to a gracious ſoul. (2.) *Becauſe of the Lord*, and his judgments, that by this means are brought in upon us like a deluge. He trembled to think of that ruin and deſolation which was coming *from the face of the Lord*, (ſo the word is) *and from the face of the word of his holineſs*, which will be inflicted by the power of God's wrath, according to the threatnings of his word, confirmed by *his holineſs*. Note, Thoſe that have God for them, yet cannot but tremble to think of the miſery of thoſe that have God againſt them.

2. He laments the abounding abominable wickedneſs of the land, and the preſent tokens of God's diſpleaſure they were under for it, *ver.* 10. *The land is full of adulterers*, it is full both of ſpiritual and corporal whoredom; they go a whoring from God, and having caſt off the fear of him, no marvel that they abandon themſelves to all manner of lewdneſs: and having diſhonoured themſelves and their own bodies, they diſhonour God and his name by raſh and falſe ſwearing, *becauſe of which the land mourns.* Both perjury and common ſwearing are ſins, for which a land muſt mourn in true repentance, or it will be made to mourn under the judgments of God. Their land mourned now under the judgment of famine, the *pleaſant places*, or rather *the paſtures*, or, as ſome read it, *the habitations of the wilderneſs*, are dried up for want of rain, and yet we ſee no ſigns of repentance; they anſwer not the ends of the correction: the tenor and tendency of mens converſations is ſinful, their courſe continues evil, as bad as ever, and they will not be diverted from it. They have a great deal of reſolution, but it is turned the wrong way, are *zealouſly affected*, but not *in a good thing*, their force is not right; their *heart is fully ſet in them to do evil*, and they are not valiant for the truth, have not courage enough to break off their evil courſes, though they ſee God thus contending with them.

3. He chargeth it all upon the prophets and prieſts, eſpecially the prophets. They are *both profane*, ver. 11. the prieſts profane the ordinances of God they pretend to adminiſter, the prophets profane the word of God they pretend to deliver; their converſe and all their converſation is profane, and then it is not ſtrange that the people are ſo debauched. They both *play the hypocrite*, ſo ſome read it; under ſacred pretenſions they carry on the vileſt deſigns: yea, not only in their own houſes, and the ill houſes they frequent, but *in my houſe have I found their wickedneſs*; in the temple, where the prieſts miniſtred, where the prophets propheſied, there were they guilty both of idolatry and immorality. See a woful inſtance in Hophni and Phinehas, 1 *Sam.* ii. 22. God ſearcheth his houſe, and what wickedneſs is there he will find it out; and the nearer it is to him, the more offenſive it is. Two things are charged upon them:

(1.) That they *taught people to ſin* by their *examples*. He compares them with the prophets of Samaria, the head city of the kingdom of the ten tribes, which had been long ſince laid waſte. It was the folly of the prophets of Samaria, that *they propheſied in Baal*, in Baal's name, ſo Ahab's prophets did, and ſo *they cauſed my people Iſrael to err*, to forſake the ſervice of the true God, and to worſhip Baal, *ver.* 13. Now the prophets of Jeruſalem did not do ſo, they propheſied in the name of the true God, and valued themſelves upon that, that they were not like the prophets of Samaria, who propheſied in Baal; but what the better, when they debauched the nation as much by their immoralities, as the other had done by their idolatries. It is a horrible thing in the prophets of Jeruſalem, that they make uſe of the name of the holy God, and yet wallow in all manner of impurity; they make nothing of committing adultery, they make uſe of the name of the God of truth, and yet *walk in lies*; they not only propheſy lies, but in common converſation one cannot believe a word they ſay. It is all either jeſt and banter, or fraud and deſign. Thus they encourage ſinners to go on in their wicked ways; for every one will ſay, Surely we may do as the prophets do; who can expect that we ſhould be better than our teachers? By this means it is, that none doth return from his wickedneſs; but they all ſay they ſhall have *peace*, though they go on, for their prophets tell them ſo. By this means Judah and Jeruſalem are become as Sodom and Gomorrah, that were wicked, *and ſinners before the Lord exceedingly*; and God looked upon them accordingly, as fit for nothing but to be deſtroyed, as they were, with fire and brimſtone.

(2.) That they *encouraged people in ſin* by their *falſe propheſies*. They made themſelves believe there was no harm, no danger in ſin, and practiſed accordingly, and then no marvel they made others believe ſo too, *ver.* 16. *They ſpeak a viſion of their own heart*; it is the product of their own invention, and agrees with their own inclination, but it is *not out of the mouth of the Lord*; he never dictated it to them, nor doth it agree either with the law of Moſes, or with what God has ſpoken by other prophets. They tell ſinners it ſhall be well with them, though they perſiſt in their ſins, *ver.* 18. See here who they are that they encourage; thoſe that *deſpiſe God*, that ſlight his authority, and have low and mean thoughts of his inſtitutions, and thoſe that *walk after the imagination of their own heart*, that are worſhippers of idols, and ſlaves to their own luſts; thoſe that are devoted to their pleaſures, put contempt upon their God. Yet ſee how theſe prophets careſſed and flattered them: they ſhould have been ſtill ſaying, There is no peace to them that go on in their evil ways, thoſe that deſpiſe God ſhall be *lightly eſteemed*; wo, and a thouſand woes to them; but they ſtill ſaid, *Ye ſhall have peace, no evil ſhall come upon you.* And, which was worſt of all, they told them, *God had ſaid ſo*; ſo making him to patronize ſin, and to contradict himſelf? Note, Thoſe that are reſolved to go on in their evil ways, will juſtly be given up to believe the ſtrong deluſions of thoſe that tell them they ſhall have *peace*, though they go on.

4. God diſowns all that theſe falſe prophets ſaid to ſooth people up in their ſins, *ver.* 21. *I have not ſent theſe prophets*, they never had any miſſion from God, they were not only not ſent by him on this errand, but they were never ſent by him on any errand, he never had employed them in any ſervice or buſineſs for him; and as to this matter, whereas they pretended to have inſtructions from him to aſſure this people of *peace*, he declares he never gave them any ſuch inſtructions; yet they were very forward, they *ran*, they were very bold, *they propheſied* without any of that difficulty with which the true prophets ſometimes ſtruggled. They ſaid to ſinners, *You ſhall have peace.* But *ver.* 18. *Who hath ſtood in the counſel of the Lord*, i. e. who of you hath, that are ſo confident of this? You deliver this meſſage with a great deal of aſſurance, but have you conſulted God about it? No, you never conſidered whether it be agreeable to the diſcoveries God has made of himſelf, whether it will conſiſt with the honour of his holineſs and juſtice, to let ſinners go unpuniſhed? You have not *perceived and heard his word*, nor *marked* that, you have not compared this with the ſcripture; if you had taken notice of that, and of the conſtant tenor of it, you would never have delivered ſuch a meſſage. The prophets themſelves muſt try the ſpirits by the touchſtone of the law and of the teſtimony, as well as thoſe to whom they propheſy: but which of thoſe did ſo that propheſied of peace? That they did not *ſtand in God's counſel* nor *hear his word*, is proved afterwards, *ver.* 22. *If they had ſtood in my counſel* as they pretend, (1.) They would have made the ſcriptures their ſtandard, *they would have cauſed my people to hear my words*, and would have conſcientiouſly

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kept close to them. But not speaking according to that rule, it is a plain evidence there is no light in them. (2.) They would have made the conversion of souls their business, and would have aimed at that in all their preaching; they would have done all they could to *turn* people *from their evil way* in general, and from all the particular *evil of their doings*. They would have encouraged and assisted the reformation of manners, would have made this their scope in all their preaching, to part between men and their sins; but it appeared this was a thing they never aimed at, but, on the contrary, to encourage sinners in their sin. (3.) They would have had some seals of their ministry. This sense our translation gives it, if they had *stood in my counsel*, and the words they had preached had been *my words*, then they should *have turned them from their evil way*. A divine power should have gone along with the word, for the conviction of sinners; God will own his own institutions. Yet this is no certain rule, Jeremiah himself, though God sent him, prevailed with but few to *turn from their evil way*.

5. God threatens to punish these prophets for their wickedness. They promised the people *peace*, and to shew them the folly of that, God tells them they should have no peace themselves; they were very unfit to warrant the people, and pass their word to them, that no evil shall come upon them, when all evil is coming upon themselves, and they are not aware of it, *ver.* 12. Because the prophets and priests are profane, *therefore their ways shall be unto them as slippery ways in the darkness:* They that undertake to lead others, because they mislead them, and know they do so, they shall themselves have no comfort in their way. (1) They pretend to shew others the way, but they shall themselves be in the dark, or in a mist, their light or sight shall fail; so that they shall not be able to look before them, shall have no forecast for themselves. (2.) They pretend to give assurances to others, but they themselves shall find no firm footing, *their ways shall be to them as slippery ways*, in which they shall not go with any steadiness, safety, or satisfaction. (3.) They pretend to make the people easy with their flatteries, but they shall themselves be uneasy, *they shall be driven*, forced forward as captives, or making their escape as those that are pursued, and *they shall fall in the way* by which they hoped to escape, and so fall into the enemies hands. (4.) They pretend to prevent the evil that threatens others, but God will *bring evil upon them, even the year of their visitation*, the time fixed for calling them to an account; and such a time is fixed concerning all that do not judge themselves; and it will be an evil time. *The year of visitation* is the year of recompences. It is further threatned, *ver.* 15. *I will feed them with wormwood*, or poison, with that which is not only nauseous, but noxious, and *make them drink waters of gall*, or, as some read it, *juice of hemlock*, see *chap.* ix. 15. And justly is the cup of trembling put into their hand first, for *from the prophets of Jerusalem*, that should have been patterns of piety and every thing that is praise worthy, even *from them is profaneness gone forth into all the lands*. Nothing more effectually debaucheth a nation than the debauchery of ministers.

6. The people are here warned not to give any credit to these false prophets; for though they flattered them with hopes of impunity, the judgments of God would certainly break out against them, unless they repented, *ver.* 16. Take notice what God saith, and *hearken not to the words of these prophets*; for you will find in the issue God's word shall stand, and not theirs. God's word will make you serious, but *they make you vain*, feed you with vain hopes, which will fail you at last. They tell you, *no evil shall come upon you*; but hear what God saith, *ver.* 19. *Behold, a whirlwind of the Lord is gone forth in fury*, they tell you, all shall be calm and serene, but God tells you, there is a storm coming, a *whirlwind of the Lord*, of his sending, and therefore there is no standing before it: It is a *whirlwind* raised by divine wrath; it is *gone forth in fury*, a wind that is brought *forth* out of the treasuries of divine vengeance, and therefore it is a *grievous whirlwind*, and shall light heavy, with rain and hail *upon the head of the wicked*, which they cannot avoid, nor find any shelter from. It shall *fall upon the wicked* prophets themselves, that deceived the people, and the wicked people that suffered themselves to be deceived. A *horrible tempest* shall be *the portion of their cup*, Psalm xi. 6. This sentence is bound on as irreversible, *ver.* 20. *The anger of the Lord shall not return*, for the decree is gone forth, God will not alter his mind, nor suffer his anger to be turned away, *till he have executed* the sentence, and *performed the thoughts of his heart*. God's whirlwind when it comes *down from heaven returneth not thither, but accomplisheth that for which he sent it*, Isa. lv. 11. This they will not consider now, but *in the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly*, consider it *with understanding:* So the word is, or, *with consideration*. Note, Those that will not fear the threatnings shall feel the execution of them, and will then *perfectly understand* what they will not now admit the evidence of, what a *fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of* a just and jealous God. They that will not consider in time, will be made to consider when it is too late. *Son, remember.*

7. Divers things are here offered to the consideration of these false prophets for their conviction, that, if possible, they might be brought to recant their error, and acknowledge the cheat they had put upon God's people.

1. Let them consider, that though they may impose upon men, God is too wise to be imposed upon. Men cannot see through their fallacies, but God can and doth. Here,

(1.) God asserts his own omnipresence and omniscience in general, *ver.* 23, 24. When they told the people that *no evil* should befal them though they went on in their evil ways, they went upon atheistical principles, that the Lord doth not see their sin, that he cannot judge through the dark cloud, that he will not require it; and therefore they must be taught the first principles of their religion, and confronted with the most inconteſtable self-evident truths: (1.) That though God's throne is prepared in the heavens, and this earth seems to be at a distance from him, yet he is a God here in this lower world which seems to be afar off, as well as in the upper world, which seems to be at hand, *ver.* 23. The eye of God is the same on earth that it is in heaven; here it *runs to and fro* as well as there, 2 *Chron.* xvi. 9. And what is in the minds of men, whose spirits are vailed in flesh, is as clearly seen by him, as what is in the mind of angels, those unvailed spirits above that surround his throne. The power of God is the same on earth among the inhabitants of that, that it is in heaven among the armies of that; with us nearness and distance make a great difference both in our observations and our operations, but it is not so with God; to him darkness and light, at hand, and afar off, are both alike. (2.) That how ingenious and industrious soever men are to disguise themselves, and their own characters and counsels, they cannot possibly be concealed from God's all-seeing eye, *ver.* 24. *Can any hide himself in the secret places* of the earth, *that I shall not see him?* Can any hide his projects and intentions in the *secret places* of the heart, that I shall not see them? No arts of concealment can hide men from the eye of God, nor deceive his judgment of them. (3.) That he is every where present; he doth not only rule heaven and earth, and uphold both by his universal providence, but he *fills heaven and earth* by his essential presence, *Psalm* cxxxix. 7, 8, &c. No place can either include him, or exclude him.

(2.) He applies this to these prophets, that had a notable art of disguising themselves, *ver.* 25, 26. *I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in my name:* they thought he was so wholly taken up with the other world, that he had no leisure to take cognizance of what passed in this: But God will make them know, that he knows all their impostures, all the shams they have put upon the world under colour of divine revelation. What they intended to humour the people with, they pretended to have had from God in *a dream*, when there was no such thing. This they could not discover; if a man tell me he dreamed so and so, I cannot contradict him; he knows I cannot; but God discovered the fraud. Perhaps the false prophets whispered what they had to say in the ears of such as were their confidents, saying, so and so *I have dreamed*, but God overheard them. The heart-searching eye of God traced them in all the methods they took to deceive the people, and he cries out, *How long?* Shall I always bear with them? *Is it in the hearts of those prophets* (so some read it) *to be ever prophesying lies? And prophesying the deceits of their own hearts?* Will they never see what an affront they put upon God, what an abuse they put upon the people, and what judgments they are preparing for themselves?

2. Let them consider, that their palming upon people counterfeit revelations, and fathering their own fancies upon divine inspirations, was the ready way to bring all religion into contempt, and make men turn atheists and infidels; and this was the thing they really intended, though they frequently made mention of the name of God, and prefaced all they said with, *Thus saith the Lord.* Yet, saith God, *They think to cause my people to forget my name, by their dreams:* they designed to draw people off from the worship of God, from all regard to God's laws and ordinances, and the true prophets, as their fathers *forgot God's name for Baal.* Note, The great thing Satan aims at is to make people forget God, and all that whereby he has made himself known; and he has many subtle methods to bring them to this: sometimes he doth it by setting up false gods, bring men in love with Baal, and they soon forget the name of God; sometimes by misrepresenting the true God, as if he were altogether such a one as ourselves: Pretences to new revelation may prove as dangerous to religion, as the denying of all revelation; and false prophets in God's name may perhaps do more mischief to the power of godliness, than false prophets in Baal's name, as being less guarded against.

3. Let them consider what a vast difference there was between their prophecies, and those that were delivered by the true prophets of the Lord, *ver.* 28. *The prophet that has a dream*, which was that way of Inspiration that the false prophets most pretended to, if he has a dream, *let him tell it as a dream*; so Mr. Gataker reads it; let him lay no more stress upon it than men do upon their dreams, nor expect any more regard to be had to it; let them not say, it is from God, nor call their foolish dreams divine oracles; but let the true prophet that *has my word, speak my word faithfully*, speak it *as a truth*; so some read it; let him keep close to his instructions, and you will soon perceive a vast difference between the dreams that the false prophets tell, and the divine dictates which the true prophets deliver; he that pretends to have a message from God, whether by dream or voice, let him declare it, and it will easily appear which is of God, and which is not. Those that have spiritual senses exercised will be able to distinguish, for *what is the chaff*

to

to the wheat? The promiſes of peace which theſe prophets make to you, are no more to be compared to God's promiſes, than chaff to wheat. Men's fancies are light, and vain, and worthleſs, as the chaff *which the wind drives away.* But the word of God hath ſubſtance in it; it is of value, is food for the ſoul, the bread of life. Wheat was the ſtaple commodity of Canaan, that valley of viſion; *Deut.* viii. 8. *Ezek.* xxvii. 17. There is as much difference between the vain fancies of men and the pure word of God, as between the *chaff* and the *wheat.* It follows, *ver.* 29. *Is not my word like a fire, ſaith the Lord?* Is their word ſo? Has it the power and efficacy that the word of God has? No, nothing like it; there is no more compariſon than between painted fire and real fire. Theirs is like an *ignis fatuus*, leading men into by-paths, and dangerous precipices. Note, The word of God is like fire. The law was a fiery law, *Deut.* xxxiii. 2. and of the goſpel, Chriſt ſaith, *I am come to ſend fire on the earth*, Luke xii. 49. Fire has different effects, according as the matter is on which it works; it hardens clay, but ſoftens wax; it conſumes the droſs, but purifies the gold; ſo the word of God is to ſome *a ſavour of life unto life, to others of death unto death.* God appeals here to the conſciences of thoſe to whom the word was ſent, *Is not my word like fire?* Has it not been ſo to you? *Zech.* i. 6. ſpeak as you have found. It is compared likewiſe to a *hammer, breaking the rock in pieces*; the unhumbled heart of man is like a rock, if it will not be melted by the word of God as the fire, it will be *broken to pieces* by it as *the hammer.* Whatever oppoſition is given to the word, it will be born down and broken to pieces.

4. Let them conſider, that while they went on in this courſe, God was *againſt them.* Three times they are told this, *ver.* 30, 31, 32. *Behold, I am againſt the prophets.* They pretended to be for God, and made uſe of his name, but were really againſt him; he looks upon them as they were really, and is *againſt* them. How can they be long ſafe, or at all eaſy, that have a God of almighty power againſt them? While theſe prophets were promiſing peace to the people, God was proclaiming war againſt them. They ſtand indicted here,

1. For robbery; *They ſteal my word every one from his neighbour.* Some underſtand it of that word of God which the good prophets preached; they ſtole their ſermons, their expreſſions, and mingled them with their own, as huckſters mingle bad wares with ſome good to make them vendible. Thoſe that were ſtrangers to the ſpirit of the true prophets, mimicked their language, picked up ſome good ſayings of theirs, and delivered them to the people as if they had been their own, but with an ill grace; it was not of a piece with the reſt of their diſcourſes. *The legs of the lame are not equal, ſo is a parable in the mouth of fools*, Prov. xxvi. 7. Others underſtand it of the word of God as it was received and entertained by ſome of the people; they *ſtole it out of their hearts*, as the wicked one in the parable is ſaid to *ſteal the good ſeed of the word*, Mat. xiii. 19. By their inſinuations they diminiſhed the authority, and ſo weakened the efficacy of the word of God upon the minds of thoſe that ſeemed to be under convictions by it.

2. They ſtand indicted for counterfeiting the broad ſeal. Therefore God is againſt them, *ver.* 31. becauſe they *uſe their tongues* at their pleaſure, in their diſcourſes to the people, they ſay what they themſelves think fit, and then father it upon God, pretend they had it from him, and ſay, *He ſaith it.* Some read it, *they ſmooth their tongues*, they are very complaiſant to the people, and ſay nothing but what is pleaſing and plauſible; they never reprove them, or threaten them, but their *words* are *ſmoother than butter*; thus they ingratiate themſelves with them, and get money by them, and they have the impudence and impiety to make God the patron of their lies; they ſay, he ſaith ſo. What greater indignity can be done to the God of truth, than to lay the brats of the father of lies at his door?

3. They ſtand indicted as common cheats, *ver.* 32. *I am againſt them*, for they *propheſy falſe dreams*, pretending that to be a divine inſpiration, which is but an invention of their own; this is a horrid fraud; nor will it excuſe them to ſay, *caveat emptor*, and *ſi populus vult decipi, decipiatur:* No, it is the people's fault that they err, that they take things upon truſt, and do not try the ſpirits; but it is much more their fault, that they cauſe God's people *to err by their lies*, and by their lightneſs, by the flatteries of their preaching, ſoothing them up in their ſins, and by the looſeneſs and lewdneſs of their converſation, encouraging them to perſiſt in them. (1.) God diſowns their having any commiſſion from him; *I ſent them not, nor commanded them*; they are not God's meſſengers, nor is what they ſay, his meſſage. (2.) He therefore juſtly denies his bleſſing with them. *Therefore they ſhall not profit this people at all.* All the profit they aim at is to make them eaſy, but they ſhall not ſo much as do that; for God's providences will at the ſame time be making them uneaſy. They *do not profit this people*, ſo ſome read it; and more is implied than is expreſſed; they not only do them no good, but do them a great deal of hurt. Note, Thoſe that corrupt the word of God, while they pretend to preach it, are ſo far from edifying the church, that they do it the greateſt miſchief imaginable.

33. ¶ And when this people, or the prophet, or a prieſt ſhall ask thee, ſaying, What *is* the burden of the LORD? thou ſhalt then ſay unto them, What burden? I will even forſake you, ſaith the LORD. 34. And *as for* the prophet, and the prieſt, and the people that ſhall ſay, The burden of the LORD, I will even puniſh that man and his houſe. 35. Thus ſhall ye ſay every one to his neighbour, and every one to his brother, What hath the LORD anſwered? and, What hath the LORD ſpoken? 36. And the burden of the LORD ſhall ye mention no more: for every man's word ſhall be his burden: for ye have perverted the words of the living God, of the LORD of hoſts, our God. 37. Thus ſhalt thou ſay to the prophet, What hath the LORD anſwered thee? and, What hath the LORD ſpoken? 38. But ſith ye ſay, The burden of the LORD; therefore thus ſaith the LORD, Becauſe you ſay this word, The burden of the LORD, and I have ſent unto you, ſaying, Ye ſhall not ſay, The burden of the LORD: 39. Therefore behold, I, even I will utterly forget you, and I will forſake you, and the city that I gave you and your fathers, *and caſt you* out of my preſence. 40. And I will bring an everlaſting reproach upon you, and a perpetual ſhame, which ſhall not be forgotten.

The profaneneſs of the people, with that of the prieſts and prophet, is here reproved in a particular inſtance, which may ſeem of ſmall moment in compariſon of their greater crimes; but profaneneſs in common diſcourſe, and the debauching of the language of a nation, being a notorious evidence of the prevalency of wickedneſs in it, we are not to think it ſtrange, that this matter was ſo largely and warmly inſiſted upon here. Obſerve,

1. The ſin here charged upon them is bantering God's prophets, and the dialect they uſed; and jeſting with ſacred things, they asked, *what is the burden of the Lord?* ver. 33. and ver. 34. they ſay, *the burden of the Lord*, and *ver.* 38. This was the word that gave great offence to God, that whenever they ſpake of *the word of the Lord*, they called it in ſcorn and deriſion, *the burden of the Lord.* Now, (1.) This was the word that the prophets much uſed, and uſed it ſeriouſly, to ſhew what a weight the word of God was upon their ſpirits, of what importance it was, and how preſſingly it ſhould come upon thoſe that heard it: The words of the falſe prophets had nothing ponderous in them, but God's words had; thoſe were as chaff, theſe as wheat. Now the profane ſcoffers took this word, and made a jeſt and a by-word of it; they made people merry with it, that ſo, when the prophets uſed it, they might not make people ſerious with it. Note, It has been the artifice of Satan in all ages, to obſtruct the efficacy of ſacred things, by turning them into matter of ſport and ridicule; the mocking of God's meſſengers, was the baffling of his meſſages. (2.) Perhaps this word was catched at, and reproached by the ſcoffers as an improper word, new-coined by the prophets, and not uſed in that ſenſe by any claſſick author. It was only in this and the laſt age, that the *word of the Lord* was called the *burden of the Lord*, and it could not be found in their lexicons to have that ſignification. But if men take a liberty, as we ſee they do, to form new phraſes which they think more expreſſive and ſignificant in other parts of learning, why not in divinity? But eſpecially we muſt obſerve it as a rule, that the Spirit of God is not tied to our rules of ſpeaking. (3.) Some think that, becauſe when the *word of the Lord* is called a *burden*, it ſignifies ſome word of reproof and threatning which would lay load upon the hearers (yet I know not whether that obſervation will always hold) that in uſing this word *the burthen of the Lord* in a canting way, they reflected upon God as always bearing hard upon them, always teazing them, always frightning them, and ſo making the word of God a perpetual uneaſineſs to them. They make the word of God a burthen to themſelves, and then quarrel with the miniſters for making it a burthen to them. Thus the ſcoffers of the latter days, while they ſlight heaven and ſalvation, reproach faithful miniſters for preaching hell and damnation. Upon the whole we may obſerve, That how light ſoever men may make of it, the great God takes notice of and is much diſpleaſed with thoſe that burleſque ſacred things, and that they may make a jeſt of ſcripture truths and laws, put jeſts upon ſcripture language. In ſuch wit as this I am ſure there is no wiſdom, and ſo it will appear at laſt. *Be ye not mockers, leſt your bands be made ſtrong.* Thoſe that were here guilty of this ſin were ſome of the falſe prophets, who perhaps came to ſteal the word of God from the true prophets, ſome of the prieſts who perhaps came to ſeek occaſions againſt them on which to ground an information, and ſome of the people who had learned of the profane prieſts and prophets to play with the things of God. The people would not have affronted the prophet and his God thus, if the prieſts and the prophets, thoſe ringleaders of miſchief, had not ſhewn them the way.

2. When they are reproved for this profane way of ſpeaking, they are directed how to expreſs themſelves more decently. We do not find that the prophets are directed to make no more uſe of this word; we find it uſed long after this, *Zech.* ix. 1. *Mal.* i. 1.

Nah. i. 1. *Hab.* i. 1. And we do not find it once uſed in this ſenſe by Jeremiah either before or after. It is true indeed, that in many caſes it is adviſeable to make uſe of no ſuch words and things as ſome have made an ill uſe of, and it may be prudence to avoid ſuch phraſes, as, though innocent enough, are in danger of being perverted and made ſtumbling blocks: But here God will have the prophet ſtick to his rule, *chap.* xv. 19. *Let them return unto thee, but return not thou unto them.* Do not thou leave off uſing this word, but let them leave off abuſing it; ye *ſhall not mention the burden of the Lord any more* in this profane careleſs manner, *ver.* 36. for it is *perverting the words of the living God*, and making an ill uſe of them, which is an impious dangerous thing, for conſider he is *the Lord of hoſts our God.* Note, If we will but look upon God, as we ought to do in his greatneſs and goodneſs, and be but duly ſenſible of our relation and obligation to him, it may be hoped, we will not dare to affront him by making a jeſt of his words. It is an impudent thing to abuſe him that is the *living God*, the *Lord of hoſts* and *our God.* How then muſt they expreſs themſelves? He tells them, *ver.* 37. *Thus ſhalt thou ſay to the prophet*, when thou art enquiring of him, *What hath the Lord anſwered thee? And what hath the Lord ſpoken?* And *ver.* 35. they muſt ſay thus, when they enquire of *their neighbours.* Note, We muſt always ſpeak of the things of God reverently and ſeriouſly, and *as* becomes *the oracles of God.* It is a commendable practice to enquire after the mind of God, to enquire of our brethren what they have heard, to enquire of our prophets what they have to ſay from God; but then, to ſhew that we do it for a right end, we muſt do it after a right manner. Miniſters may learn here, when they reprove people for what they ſay and do amiſs, to teach them how to ſay and do better.

3. Becauſe they would not leave off this ill way of ſpeaking, though they were admoniſhed of it, God threatens them here with utter ruin. They would ſtill ſay, *the burden of the Lord*, though God had ſent to them to forbid them, *ver.* 38. What little regard have thoſe to the divine authority, that will not be perſuaded by it to leave an idle word. But ſee what will come of it.

1. Thoſe ſhall be ſeverely reckoned with, that thus *pervert the words of God*, that put a wrong conſtruction on them, and make an ill uſe of them; and it ſhall be made to appear, what a great provocation it is to God to mock his meſſengers. *I will even puniſh that man and his houſe*, whether he be prophet or prieſt, or one of the common people, it ſhall be viſited upon him, *ver.* 34. Perverting God's word, and ridiculing the preachers of it, is a ſin that brings ruining judgments upon families, and entails a curſe upon a houſe. Another threatning we have, *ver.* 36. *Every man's word ſhall be his own burden*, i. e. the guilt of this ſin ſhall be ſo heavy upon him, as to ſink him into the pit of deſtruction. God *ſhall make their own tongue to fall upon themſelves*, Pſal. lxiv. 8. God will give them enough of their jeſt, ſo that *the burden of the Lord* they ſhall have no heart to mention any more; it will be too heavy to make a jeſt of. They are as *the madman that caſteth fire-brands, arrows, and death*, while they pretend to be *in ſport.*

2. The words of God, though thus perverted, ſhall be accompliſhed. Do they ask, *What is the burden of the Lord?* Let the prophet ask them, *what burden* they mean? Is it this? *I will even forſake you.* This is the burden that ſhall be laid and bound upon them, *ver.* 39, 40. *Behold, I, even I will utterly forget you, and I will forſake you.* I will leave you, and have no thoughts of returning to you. Thoſe are miſerable indeed, that are forſaken and forgotten of God, and mens bantering God's judgments will not baffle them. Jeruſalem was the city God had taken to himſelf as a holy city, and then *given to them and their fathers*; but that ſhall now be forſaken and forgotten. God had taken them to be a people near to him, but they ſhall now be *caſt out of his preſence.* They had been great and honourable among the nations, but now God will bring upon them an *everlaſting reproach*, and a *perpetual ſhame*; both their ſin and their puniſhment ſhall be their everlaſting diſgrace. It is here upon record to their infamy, and will remain ſo to the world's end. Note, God's word will be magnified and made honourable, when thoſe that mock at it ſhall be vilified and made contemptible. *They that deſpiſe me, ſhall be lightly eſteemed.*

CHAP. XXIV.

In the cloſe of the foregoing chapter, we had a general prediction of the utter ruin of Jeruſalem, that it ſhould be forſaken and forgotten; which, whatever effect it had upon others, we have reaſon to think made the prophet himſelf very melancholy: Now in this chapter, God encourageth him by ſhewing him, that though the deſolation ſeemed to be univerſal, yet all were not equally involved in it, but God knew how to diſtinguiſh, how to ſeparate between the precious and the vile. Some were gone into captivity already with Jeconiah, over them Jeremiah lamented, but God tells him it ſhould turn to their good; others yet remained hardened in their ſins, againſt whom Jeremiah had a juſt indignation: But thoſe, God tells him, ſhould go into captivity, and it ſhould prove to their hurt. To inform the prophet of this, and affect him with it; here is, (1.) A viſion of two baskets of figs, one very good, and the other very bad, ver. 1,—3. *(2.) The explication of this viſion, applying the good figs to thoſe that were already ſent into captivity for their good,* ver. 4,—7. *The bad figs to thoſe that ſhould hereafter be ſent into captivity for their hurt,* ver. 8,—10.

THE LORD ſhewed me, and behold, two baſkets of figs *were* ſet before the temple of the LORD, after that Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon had carried away captive Jeconiah the ſon of Jehoiakim king of Judah, and the princes of Judah, with the carpenters and ſmiths from Jeruſalem, and had brought them to Babylon. 2. One basket *had* very good figs, *even* like the figs *that are* firſt ripe: and the other basket *had* very naughty figs, which could not be eaten, they were ſo bad. 3. Then ſaid the LORD unto me, What ſeeſt thou, Jeremiah? and I ſaid, Figs: the good figs, very good; and the evil, very evil, that cannot be eaten, they are ſo evil. 4. ¶ Again the word of the LORD came unto me, ſaying, 5. Thus ſaith the LORD the God of Iſrael, Like theſe good figs, ſo will I acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah, whom I have ſent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans for *their* good. 6. For I will ſet mine eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them again to this land, and I will build them, and not pull *them* down; and I will plant them, and not pluck *them* up. 7. And I will give them an heart to know me, that I *am* the LORD, and they ſhall be my people, and I will be their God: for they ſhall return unto me with their whole heart. 8. ¶ And as the evil figs, which cannot be eaten, they are ſo evil: (ſurely thus ſaith the LORD) ſo will I give Zedekiah the king of Judah, and his princes, and the reſidue of Jeruſalem, that remain in this land, and them that dwell in the land of Egypt. 9. And I will deliver them to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth for *their* hurt, *to be* a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curſe in all places whither I ſhall drive them. 10. And I will ſend the ſword, the famine, and the peſtilence among them, till they be conſumed from off the land, that I gave unto them and to their fathers.

This ſhort chapter helps us to put a very comfortable conſtruction upon a great many long ones, by ſhewing us, that the ſame providence which to ſome is a *ſavour of death unto death*, may by the grace and bleſſing of God be made to others a *ſavour of life unto life:* And that though God's people ſhare in the ſame calamity, yet it is not the ſame to them that it is to others, but is deſigned for their good, and ſhall iſſue in their good; to them it is a correcting rod in the hand of a tender father, while to others it is an avenging ſword in the hand of a righteous judge.

Obſerve, 1. The date of this ſermon. It was after, a little after, Jeconiah's captivity, *ver.* 1. Jeconiah was himſelf a *deſpiſed broken veſſel*, but with him were carried away ſome very valuable perſons, Ezekiel for one, *chap.* i. 2. many of the *princes of Judah* then went into captivity, Daniel and his fellows were carried off a little before; of the people only *the carpenters and the ſmiths* were forced away, either becauſe the Chaldeans needed ſome ingenious men of thoſe trades, they had a great plenty of aſtrologers and ſtargazers, but a great ſcarcity of *ſmiths* and *carpenters*; or becauſe the Jews would have a great loſs of them, and would for want of them be unable to fortify their cities, and furniſh themſelves with weapons of war. Now it ſhould ſeem, there were many good people carried away in that captivity, which the pious prophet laid much to heart, while there were thoſe that triumphed in it, and inſulted over thoſe to whoſe lot it fell to go into captivity. Note, We muſt not conclude concerning the firſt and greateſt ſufferers, that they were the worſt and greateſt ſinners; for perhaps it may appear quite otherwiſe, as it did here.

2. The viſion by which this diſtinction of the captives was repreſented to the prophet's mind. He ſaw *two baskets of figs, ſet before the temple*, there ready to be offered as firſt-fruits, to the honour of God. Perhaps the prieſts being remiſs in their duty, were not ready to receive them, and diſpoſe of them according to the law, and therefore Jeremiah ſees them ſtanding *before the temple.* But that which was the ſignificancy of the viſion was, that the *figs* in one *basket* were extraordinary good, thoſe in the other *basket* extremely bad. The children of men are all as the *fruits of the fig-tree*, capable of being made ſerviceable to *God and man*, Judg. ix. 11. but ſome are as *good figs*, than which nothing more pleaſant, others as damaged rotten *figs*, than which nothing more nauſeous. What creature viler than a wicked man, and what more valuable than a godly man. The *good figs* were like thoſe that are *firſt ripe*, which are moſt acceptable, *Mic.* vii. 1. and moſt prized when newly come into ſeaſon. The bad *figs* are ſuch as could *not be eaten they were ſo evil*; they could not anſwer the end of their creation, were neither pleaſant, nor *good for food*, and what then were they good for? If God has no honour from men, nor their generation any ſervice, they are even like the *bad figs*, that *cannot be eaten*, that will not anſwer any good purpoſe; *if the ſalt have loſt his ſavour,*

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it is thenceforth fit for nothing but *the dunghil.* Of the persons that are presented to the Lord at the door of *his tabernacle*, some are sincere, and they are *very good*; others dissemble with God, and they are *very bad*; sinners are the worst of men, hypocrites the worst of sinners. *Corruptio optimi est pessima.*

3. The exposition and application of this vision. God intended by it to raise the dejected spirits of those that were gone into captivity, by assuring them of a happy return, and to humble and awaken the proud and secure spirits of those who continued yet in Jerusalem, by assuring them of a miserable captivity.

1. Here is the moral of the *good figs*, that were very good, the first ripe, those represented the pious captives, that seemed first ripe for ruin, for they went first into captivity, but should prove first ripe for mercy, and their captivity should help to ripen them; these are pleasing to God, as *good figs* are to us, and shall be carefully preserved for use. Now observe here,

(1.) Those that were already *carried into captivity* were the *good figs* that God would own. This shews, (1.) That we cannot determine of God's love or hatred *by all that is before us.* When God's judgments are abroad, they are not always the worst that are first seized by them. (2.) That early suffering sometimes proves for the best to us. The sooner the child is corrected, the better effect the correction is likely to have: those that went first into captivity, were as the son whom the *father loves and chastens betimes*, chastens while there is hope, and it did well; but those that staid behind, were like a child long *left to himself*, who when afterwards corrected is stubborn and made worse by it, *Lam.* iii. 27.

(2.) God owns their captivity to be his doing; whoever were the instruments of it, he ordered and directed it, *ver.* 5. *I have sent them out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans.* It is God that puts his gold into the furnace to be tried; his hand is, in an especial manner, to be eyed in the afflictions of good people. The judge orders the malefactor into the hand of an executioner, but the father corrects the child with his own hand.

(3.) Even this disgraceful uncomfortable captivity God intended for their benefit, and we are sure his intentions are never frustrated. *I have sent them into the land of the Chaldeans for their good.* It seemed to be every way for their hurt, not only as it was the ruin of their estates, honours, and liberties, parted them from their relations and friends, and put them under the power of their enemies and oppressors, but as it sunk their spirits, discouraged their faith, deprived them of the benefit of God's oracles and ordinances, and exposed them to temptations, and yet it was designed for their good, and proved so in the issue, as to many of them; *Out of the eater came forth meat.* By their afflictions they were convinced of sin, humbled under the hand of God, weaned from the world, made serious, taught to pray, and turned from their iniquity, particularly they were cured of their inclination to idolatry, and thus it was *good for them that they were afflicted*, Psal. cxix. 67, 71.

(4.) God promiseth them that he will own them in their captivity; though they seem abandoned, they shall be acknowledged; their scornful relations they left behind will scarce own them, or their kindred to them, but God saith, *I will acknowledge them.* Note, The Lord knows them that are his, and will own them in all conditions, nakedness and sword shall not *separate them from his love.*

(5.) God assures them of his protection in their trouble, and a glorious deliverance out of it in due time, *ver.* 6. Being sent into captivity *for their good*, they shall not be lost there; but as when the refiner puts his gold into the furnace, 1. He has his eye upon it while it is there, and it is a careful eye, to see that it sustains no damage, so *will I set mine eyes upon them for good*, to order every thing for the best, that all the circumstances of the affliction may concur to the answering of the great intention of it. 2. He will be sure to take it out of the furnace again, as soon as the work designed upon it is done: *I will bring them again to this land.* They were sent abroad for improvement a while, under a severe discipline; but they shall be fetched back, when they have gone through their trial there, to their Fathers house. 3. He will fashion his gold when he has refined it, will make it a vessel of honour fit for his use; so, when God has brought them back from their trial, he *will build them*, and make them a habitation for himself, will *plant them*, and make them a vineyard for himself. Their captivity was to square the rough stones, and make them fit for his building, to prune up the young trees, and make them fit for his planting.

(6.) He engageth to prepare them for these temporal mercies he designed for them, by bestowing spiritual mercies upon them, *ver.* 7. It is this that will make their captivity be *for their good*; this shall be both the improvement of their affliction, and their qualification for deliverance. When our troubles are sanctified to us, then we may be sure they will end well. Now that which is promised is, 1. That they should be *better acquainted with God*; they should learn more of God by his providences in Babylon, than they had learned by all his oracles and ordinances in Jerusalem; thanks to divine grace, for if that had not wrought mightily upon them in Babylon, they would for ever have forgotten God. It is here promised, *I will give them*, not so much a head *to know me*, but a heart *to know me*, for the right knowledge of God consists not in notion and speculation, but in the convictions of the practical judgment, directing and governing the will and affections: *A good understanding have all they that do his commandments*, Psal. cxi. *ult.* Where God gives a sincere desire and inclination to know him, he will give that knowledge... It is God himself that gives a heart to know him, else we should perish for ever in our ignorance. 2. That they should be entirely *converted to God*; to his will as their rule, his service as their business, and his glory as their end; *they shall return to me with their whole heart.* God himself undertakes for them that they shall, and if he *turn us we shall be turned.* This follows upon the former; for those that have a heart to know God aright, will not only turn to him, but turn with their whole heart; for those that are either obstinate in their rebellion, or hypocritical in their religion, may truly be said to be ignorant of God. 3. That thus they should be again *taken into covenant with God*, as much to their comfort as ever: *They shall be my people, and I will be their God*; God will own them, as formerly, for his people, both in the discoveries of himself to them, his acceptance of their services, and his gracious appearances on their behalf; and they shall have liberty to own him for their God, in their prayers to him, and their expectations from him. Note, Those that have backsliden from God, if they do in sincerity return to him, are admitted as freely as any to all the privileges and comforts of the everlasting covenant, which is herein well ordered, that every transgression in the covenant doth not throw us out of covenant, and that afflictions are not only consistent with, but flowing from covenant-love.

2. Here is the moral of the *bad figs*, *Zedekiah and his princes*, and partizans, *yet remain in the land*, proud and secure enough, *Ezek.* xi. 3. Many were fled into Egypt for shelter, and they thought they had shifted well for themselves and their own safety, and boasted that though therein they had gone contrary to the command of God, yet they had acted prudently for themselves. Now as to both these that looked so scornfully upon those that were gone into captivity, it is here threatned,

1. That whereas those that were already carried away were settled in one country, where they had the comfort of one another's society, though in captivity; these should be dispersed *and removed into all the kingdoms of the earth*, where they should have no joy one of another.

2. That whereas those were carried away captives for their good, these should be removed into all countries *for their hurt.* Their afflictions should be so far from humbling them, that they should harden them; not bring them nearer to God, but set them at a greater distance from him.

3. That whereas those should have the honour of being owned of God in their troubles, these should have the shame of being abandoned by all mankind; *In all places whither I shall drive them, they shall be a reproach and a proverb.* Such a one is as false and proud as a Jew; such a one as poor and miserable as a Jew. All their neighbours shall make a jest of them, and of the calamities brought upon them.

4. That whereas those should *return to their own land*, these shall be *consumed from that land*, never to see it more, and it shall be of no avail to them to plead, it was the land God gave to their fathers, for they had it from God, and he gave it them upon condition of their obedience.

5. That whereas those were reserved for *better* times, these were reserved for *worse*; wherever they are removed, *the sword, and famine, and pestilence* shall be sent after them, shall soon overtake them, and coming with commission so to do, shall overcome them. God has variety of judgments wherewith to prosecute those that fly from justice, and those that have escaped one may expect another, till they are brought to repent and reform.

Doubtless this prophecy had its accomplishment in the men of that generation; yet because we read not of any such remarkable difference between those of Jeconiah's captivity, and those of Zedekiah's, it is probable this has a typical reference to the last destruction of the Jews by the Romans, in which those that believed were taken care of; but those that continued obstinate in unbelief, were driven into all countries for a *taunt and a curse*, and so they remain to this day.

CHAP. XXV.

The prophecy of this chapter bears date sometimes before those prophecies in the chapters next foregoing, for they are not placed in the exact order of time in which they were delivered. This is dated in the first year of Nebuchadrezzar, that remarkable year when the sword of the Lord began to be drawn and furbished. Here is, 1. *A review of the prophecies that had been delivered to Judah and Jerusalem, for many years last past, by Jeremiah himself, and other prophets, with the little regard given to them, and the little success of them,* ver. 1,—7. 2. *A very express threatning of the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem, by the king of Babylon, for their contempt of God and their continuance in sin,* ver. 8,—11. *To which is annexed, a promise of their deliverance out of their captivity in Babylon, after seventy years,* ver. 12,—14. 3. *A prediction of the devastation of divers other nations about, by Nebuchadrezzar, represented by a* cup of fury *put into their hands,* ver. 15,—28. *By a sword sent among them,* ver. 29,—33. *And a desolation made among the shepherds,*

herds, and their flocks and paſtures, ver. 34,—38. *So that we have* judgment beginning at the houſe of God, *but not ending there.*

1. THE word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the ſon of Joſiah king of Judah, that *was* the firſt year of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon: 2. The which Jeremiah the prophet ſpake unto all the people of Judah, and to all the inhabitants of Jeruſalem, ſaying, 3. From the thirteenth year of Joſiah the ſon of Amon king of Judah, even unto this day (that *is* the three and twentieth year) the word of the LORD hath come unto me, and I have ſpoken unto you, riſing early and ſpeaking, but ye have not hearkened. 4. And the LORD hath hath ſent unto you all his ſervants the prophets, riſing early and ſending *them*, but ye have not hearkened, nor inclined your ear to hear. 5. They ſaid, Turn ye again now every one from his evil way, and from the evil of your doings, and dwell in the land that the LORD hath given unto you and to your fathers, for ever and ever: 6. And go not after other gods to ſerve them, and to worſhip them, and provoke me not to anger with the works of your hands, and I will do you no hurt. 7. Yet ye have not hearkned unto me, ſaith the LORD; that ye might provoke me to anger with the works of your hands, to your own hurt.

We have here a meſſage from God concerning all the people of Judah, *ver.* 1. which Jeremiah delivered in his name unto all the people of Judah, *ver.* 2. Note, That which is of univerſal concern, ought to be of univerſal cognizance: It is fit the word that is concerning all the people, as the word of God is, the word of the goſpel particularly, ſhould be divulged to all in general, and, as far as may be, addreſſed to each in particular. Jeremiah had been ſent to the *houſe of the king*, chap. xxii. 1. and he took the courage to deliver his meſſage there; here he is ſent to all the people, and he takes the pains to deliver his meſſage to them, probably, when they were all come up to Jeruſalem, to worſhip at ſome of the ſolemn feaſts; then he had them together, and it was to be hoped then, if ever, they would be well diſpoſed to *hear counſel* and *receive inſtruction.*

This prophecy is dated in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, and firſt of Nebuchadrezzar: it was in the latter end of Jehoiakim's third year that Nebuchadrezzar began to reign himſelf alone, (having reigned ſome time before in conjunction with his father) as appears *Dan.* i. 1. but Jehoiakim's fourth year was began before Nebuchadrezzar's firſt was compleated. Now that active daring martial prince began to ſet up for the world's maſter: God, by his prophet, gives notice that he is *his ſervant*, and what work he intends to employ him in, that his growing greatneſs, which was ſo formidable to the nations, might not be conſtrued as any reflection upon the power and providence of God in the government of the world. Nebuchadrezzar ſhould not bid ſo fair for univerſal monarchy, (I ſhould have ſaid univerſal tyranny) but that God had purpoſes of his own to ſerve by him. In the execution of which, the world ſhall ſee the meaning of God's permitting and ordering a thing that ſeemed ſuch a reflection on his ſovereignty and goodneſs.

Now in this meſſage we may obſerve,

1. The great pains that had been taken with this people to bring them to repentance, which they are here put in mind of, as an aggravation of their ſin, and a juſtification of God in his proceedings againſt them.

(1.) Jeremiah, for his part, had been a conſtant preacher among them twenty three years; he began in the thirteenth year of Joſiah, who reigned thirty one years, ſo that he propheſied about eighteen or nineteen years in his reign, then in the reign of Jehoahaz, and now four years of Jehoiakim's reign. Note, God keeps an account, whether we do or no, how long we have enjoyed the means of grace; and the longer we have enjoyed them, the heavier will our account be, if we have not improved them. *Theſe three years* (theſe three and twenty years) *have I come ſeeking fruit on this fig-tree.* All this while, 1. God has been conſtant in ſending meſſages to them, as there was occaſion for them. From that time, *to this very day, the word of the Lord has come unto me*, for your uſe. Though they had the ſubſtance of the warning ſent them already in the books of Moſes, yet becauſe thoſe were not duly regarded and applied, God ſent to enforce them, and make them more particular, that they might be without excuſe. Thus God's Spirit was ſtriving with them, as with the old world, *Gen.* vi. 3. 2. Jeremiah had been faithful and induſtrious in delivering thoſe meſſages; he could appeal to themſelves, as well as to God and his own conſcience concerning this: *I have ſpoken to you riſing early and ſpeaking.* He had declared to them *the whole counſel of God*; he had taken a great deal of care and pains to diſcharge his truſt, in ſuch a manner as might be moſt likely to win and work upon them. What men are ſollicitous about, and intent upon, they riſe up early to proſecute. It intimates, that his head was ſo full of thoughts about it, and his heart ſo intent upon doing good, that it broke his ſleep, and made him get up betimes to project which way he might take that would be moſt likely to do them good. He roſe early, both becauſe he would loſe no time, and becauſe he would lay hold on, and improve the beſt time to work upon them, when, if ever, they were ſober and ſedate. Chriſt came *early in the morning* to preach in the temple; and the people as early to hear him, *Luke* xxi. 38. Morning lectures have their advantages: *My voice ſhalt thou hear in the morning.*

(2.) Beſides him God had ſent them other prophets, on the ſame errand, *ver.* 4. of the writing prophets, Micah, Nahum, and Habakkuk were a little before him; and Zephaniah cotemporary with him. But, beſide thoſe, there were many other of God's *ſervants the prophets* that preached awakening ſermons, which were never publiſhed. And here God himſelf is ſaid to *riſe early*, and *ſend them*; intimating how much his heart alſo was upon it, that this people ſhould *turn and live*, and not *go on and die*, Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

(3.) All the meſſages ſent them were to the purpoſe, and much to the ſame purpoſe, *ver.* 5, 6. 1. They all told them of their faults, *their evil way*, and the *evil of their doings.* Thoſe were not of God's ſending, who flattered them as if there were nothing amiſs among them. 2. They all reproved them particularly for their idolatry, as a ſin that was in a ſpecial manner provoking to God; their *going after other gods, to ſerve them, and to worſhip them*; gods that were *the work of their own hands.* 3. They all called on them to repent of their ſins and to reform their lives. This was the burthen of every ſong, *Turn ye now every one from his evil way.* Note, Perſonal and particular reformation muſt be inſiſted on as neceſſary to a national deliverance: *every one* muſt *turn from his* own *evil way.* The ſtreet will not be clean unleſs every one ſweep before his own door. 4. They all aſſured them, that, if they did ſo, it would certainly be the *lengthning out of their tranquillity.* The mercies they enjoyed ſhould be continued to them, *you ſhall dwell in the land*, dwell at eaſe, dwell in peace, in this good land, which the Lord has *given you and your fathers.* Nothing but ſin will turn you out of it, and that ſhall not if you turn from it. The judgments they feared ſhould be prevented; *provoke me not, and I will do you no hurt.* Note, We ſhould never receive from God the evil of puniſhment, if we did not provoke him by the evil of ſin. God deals fairly with us, never corrects his children without cauſe, nor cauſeth grief to us, unleſs we give offence to him.

(4.) Yet all was to no purpoſe. They were not wrought upon to take the right and only method to turn away the wrath of God. Jeremiah was a lively affectionate preacher, yet *they hearkned not* to him, *ver.* 3. The other prophets dealt faithfully with them, but neither did they *hearken to them*, nor *incline their ear*, ver. 4. That very particular ſin which they were told, of all other, was moſt offenſive to God, and made them obnoxious to his juſtice, they wilfully perſiſted in: you *provoke me with the works of your hands, to your own hurt.* Note, What is a provocation to God, will prove, in the end, hurt to ourſelves, and we muſt bear the blame of it: *O Iſrael, thou that haſt deſtroyed thyſelf.*

8. ¶ Therefore thus ſaith the LORD of hoſts, Becauſe ye have not heard my words, 9. Behold, I will ſend and take all the families of the north, ſaith the LORD, and Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon my ſervant, and will bring them againſt this land, and againſt the inhabitants thereof, and againſt all theſe nations round about, and will utterly deſtroy them, and make them an aſtoniſhment, and an hiſſing, and perpetual deſolations. 10. Moreover, I will take from them the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladneſs, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the ſound of the milſtones, and the light of the candle. 11. And this whole land ſhall be a deſolation, *and* an aſtoniſhment; and theſe nations ſhall ſerve the king of Babylon ſeventy years. 12. And it ſhall come to paſs when ſeventy years are accompliſhed, *that* I will puniſh the king of Babylon, and that nation, ſaith the LORD, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual deſolations. 13. And I will bring upon that land all my words which I have pronounced againſt it, *even* all *that is* written in this book, which Jeremiah hath propheſied againſt all the nations. 14. For many nations and great kings ſhall ſerve themſelves of them alſo: and I will recompenſe them according to their deeds, and according to the works of their own hands.

Here is the ſentence grounded upon the foregoing charge. *Becauſe you have not heard my words*, I muſt take another courſe with you, *ver.* 8. Note, When men will not regard the judg-

ments

ments of God's mouth, they may expect to feel the judgments of his hands; to hear the rod, ſince they would not hear the word; for the ſinner muſt either be parted from his ſin, or periſh in it. Wrath comes *without remedy*, againſt thoſe only that ſin *without repentance*. It is not ſo much mens turning aſide that ruins them, as their not returning.

1. The ruin of the land of Judah by the king of Babylon's armies, is here decreed, *ver.* 9. God ſent them *his ſervants the prophets*, and they were not heeded, and therefore God will ſend for *his ſervant the king of Babylon*, whom they cannot mock, and deſpiſe, and perſecute, as they did his ſervants the prophets. Note, The meſſengers of God's wrath will be ſent againſt thoſe that would not receive the meſſengers of his mercy. One way or other God will be heeded, and will make men know that *he is the Lord*. Nebuchadrezzar, though a ſtranger to the true God, the God of Iſrael, nay, an enemy to him, and afterwards a rival with him, yet in the deſcent he made upon this country, he was *God's ſervant*, accompliſhed his purpoſe; was employed by him, and was an inſtrument in his hand for the correction of his people. He was really ſerving God's deſigns, when he thought he was ſerving his own ends. Juſtly therefore doth God here call himſelf, *The Lord of hoſts*, ver. 8. for here is an inſtance of his ſovereign dominion, not only over the *inhabitants*, but over the *armies of this earth*, of which he makes what uſe he pleaſeth. He hath them all at his command: the moſt potent and abſolute monarchs are his ſervants; Nebuchadrezzar, that is an inſtrument of his wrath, is as truly his ſervant, as Cyrus that is an inſtrument of his mercy. The land of Judah being to be made deſolate, God here muſters his army that is to do it, gathers them together, takes *all the families of the north*, if there be occaſion for them, leads them on, as their commander in chief, *brings them againſt this land*, gives them ſucceſs, not only againſt Judah and Jeruſalem, but againſt *all the nations round about*, that there might be no dependence upon them as allies, or aſſiſtants, againſt that threatning force. The utter deſtruction of this and all the neighbouring lands, is here deſcribed, *ver.* 9, 10, 11. it ſhall be total, *the whole land ſhall be a deſolation*; not only deſolate, but a deſolation itſelf, both city and country ſhall be laid waſte, and all the wealth of both be made a prey of: it ſhall be laſting, even *perpetual deſolations*; they ſhall continue ſo long in ruins, and after long waiting there ſhall appear ſo little proſpect of relief, that every one ſhall call it *perpetual*. This deſolation ſhall be the ruin of their credit among their neighbours; it ſhall bury their honour in the duſt, ſhall *make them an aſtoniſhment and a hiſſing*; every one will be amazed at them, and hiſs them off the ſtage of action with a juſt diſgrace, for deſerting a God that would have been their protection, for impoſtors that would certainly be their deſtruction. It will likewiſe be the ruin of all their comfort among themſelves; it ſhall be a final period of all their joy, *I will take from them the voice of mirth*, hang their harps on the willow trees, and put them out of tune for ſongs. *I will take from them the voice of mirth*, they ſhall neither have cauſe for it, nor hearts for it. They would not hear the voice of God's word, and therefore the *voice of mirth* ſhall no more be heard among them. They ſhall be deprived of food, *the ſound of the milſtones ſhall not be heard*; for when the enemy hath ſeized their ſtores, *the ſound of the grinding* muſt needs be low, *Eccleſ.* xii. 4. An end ſhall be put to all buſineſs, there ſhall not be ſeen *the light of a candle*, for there ſhall be no work to be done worth candle-light. And laſtly, they ſhall be deprived of their liberty, *thoſe nations ſhall ſerve the king of Babylon ſeventy years*. The fixing of the time how long the captivity ſhall laſt, would be of great uſe, not only for the confirmation of the prophecy, when the event (which in this particular could by no human ſagacity be foreſeen) ſhould exactly anſwer the prediction, but for the comfort of the people of God in their calamity, and the encouragement of faith and prayer. Daniel, who was himſelf a prophet, had an eye to it; *Dan.* ix. 2. Nay, God himſelf had an eye to it, 2 *Chron.* xxxvi. 22. for therefore he *ſtirred up the ſpirit of Cyrus*, that the word ſpoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accompliſhed; *known unto God are all his works, from the beginning of the world*; which appears by this, that when he has thought fit, ſome of them have been made known to his ſervants the prophets, and by them to his church.

2. The ruin of Babylon at laſt is here likewiſe foretold, as it had been long before, by Iſaiah, *ver.* 12, 13, 14. The deſtroyers muſt themſelves be deſtroyed, and the rod thrown into the fire when the correcting work is done with it. This ſhall be done when *ſeventy years are accompliſhed*, for the deſtruction of Babylon muſt make way for the deliverance of the captives. It is a great doubt when theſe *ſeventy years* commence; ſome date them from the captivity in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, and firſt of Nebuchadrezzar; others from the captivity of Jehoiachin eight years after: I rather incline to the former, becauſe then theſe nations began *to ſerve the king of Babylon*, and becauſe uſually God has taken the earlieſt time from which to reckon the accompliſhment of a promiſe of mercy, as will appear in computing the four hundred years ſervitude in Egypt. And if ſo, eighteen or nineteen years of the ſeventy were run out before Jeruſalem and the temple were quite deſtroyed in the eleventh year of Zedekiah. However that be, when the time, the ſet time to favour Zion is come, the king of Babylon muſt be viſited, and all the inſtances of his tyranny reckoned for: then that nation ſhall be puniſhed *for their iniquity*, as the other nations have been puniſhed for theirs. That land muſt then be a *perpetual deſolation*, ſuch as they had made other lands: for the *Judge of all the earth* will both *do right*, and *avenge wrong*, as King of nations, and King of ſaints. Let proud conquerors and oppreſſors be moderate in the uſe of their power and ſucceſs, for it will come at laſt to their own turn to ſuffer; their day will come to fall. In this deſtruction of Babylon, which was to be brought about by the Medes and Perſians, reference ſhall be had, (1.) To what God had ſaid, *I will bring upon that land all my words*; for all the wealth and honour of Babylon ſhall be ſacrificed to the truth of the divine predictions, and all its power broken, rather than one iota or tittle of God's word ſhall fall to the ground. The ſame Jeremiah that propheſied the deſtruction of other nations by the Chaldeans, foretold alſo the deſtruction of the Chaldeans themſelves; and this muſt be brought upon them, *ver.* 13. It is with reference to this very event that God ſaith, *ver.* 26. he will *confirm the word of his ſervant*, and *perform the counſel of his meſſengers*, Iſa. xliv. 26. (2.) To what they had done, *ver.* 14. *I will recompenſe them according to their deeds*, by which they tranſgreſſed the law of God, even then when they were made to ſerve his purpoſes. They had made many nations to *ſerve them*, and trampled upon them with the greateſt inſolence imaginable: but now the meaſure of their iniquity is full, *many nations and great kings*, that are in alliance with, and come in to the aſſiſtance of Cyrus king of Perſia, ſhall *ſerve themſelves of them* alſo, ſhall make themſelves maſters of their country, and enrich themſelves with their ſpoils, and make them the footſtool by which to mount the throne of an univerſal monarchy. They ſhall make uſe of them for ſervants and ſoldiers; *He that leadeth into captivity ſhall go into captivity*.

15. ¶ For thus ſaith the LORD God of Iſrael unto me, Take the wine-cup of this fury at my hand, and cauſe all the nations to whom I ſend thee, to drink it. 16. And they ſhall drink, and be moved, and be mad, becauſe of the ſword that I will ſend among them. 17. Then took I the cup at the LORD's hand, and made all the nations to drink, unto whom the LORD had ſent me: 18. *To wit*, Jeruſalem, and the cities of Judah, and the kings thereof, and the princes thereof, to make them a deſolation, an aſtoniſhment, an hiſſing, and a curſe (as *it is* this day) 19. Pharaoh king of Egypt, and his ſervants, and his princes, and all his people, 20. And all the mingled people, and all the kings of the land of Uz, and all the kings of the land of the Philiſtines, and Aſhkelon, and Azzah, and Ekron, and the remnant of Aſhdod, 21. Edom, and Moab, and the children of Ammon, 22. And all the kings of Tyrus, and all the kings of Zidon, and the kings of the iſles which *are* beyond the ſea, 23. Dedan, and Tema, and Buz, and all *that are* in the utmoſt corners, 24. And all the kings of Arabia, and all the kings of the mingled people that dwell in the deſert, 25. And all the kings of Zimri, and all the kings of Elam, and all the kings of the Medes, 26. And all the kings of the north, far and near, one with another, and all the kingdoms of the world, which *are* upon the face of the earth: and the king of Sheſhach ſhall drink after them. 27. Therefore thou ſhalt ſay unto them, Thus ſaith the LORD of hoſts, the God of Iſrael, Drink ye, and be drunken, and ſpue and fall, and riſe no more, becauſe of the ſword which I will ſend among you. 28. And it ſhall be, if they refuſe to take the cup at thine hand to drink, then ſhalt thou ſay unto them, Thus ſaith the LORD of hoſts, Ye ſhall certainly drink. 29. For lo, I begin to bring evil on the city which is called by my name, and ſhould ye be utterly unpuniſhed? Ye ſhall not be unpuniſhed: for I will call for a ſword upon all the inhabitants of the earth, ſaith the LORD of hoſts.

Under the ſimilitude of a cup going round, which all the company muſt drink of, is here repreſented the univerſal deſolation that was now coming upon that part of the world, which Nebuchadrezzar, who juſt now began to reign and act, was to be the inſtrument of, and which ſhould, at length, recoil upon his own country. The *cup* in the viſion, is to be a *ſword* in the accompliſhment of it: ſo it is explained, *ver.* 16. it is *the ſword that I will ſend among them*, the ſword of war that ſhould be irreſiſtibly ſtrong, and implacably cruel. Obſerve,

1. Whence this deſtroying ſword ſhould come; *from the hand of God*, it is the *ſword of the Lord*, Jer. xlvii. 6. *bathed in heaven*, Iſa. xxxiv. 5. wicked men are made uſe of as his ſword,

Pſal. xvii. 13. It is *the wine-cup of his fury.* It is the juſt anger of God that ſends this judgment; the nations have provoked him by their ſins, and they muſt fall under the tokens of his wrath. Theſe are compared to ſome intoxicating liquor, which they ſhall be forced to drink of, as formerly condemned malefactors were ſometimes executed by being compelled to drink poiſon. The wicked are ſaid to *drink the wrath of the Almighty*, Job. xxi. 10. Rev. xiv. 10. Their ſhare of troubles in this world is repreſented by the dregs of a cup of red wine full of mixture, *Pſal.* lxxv. 8. See *Pſal.* xi. 6. The wrath of God in this world is but as *a cup*, in compariſon of the full ſtreams of it in the other world.

2. By whoſe hand it ſhould be ſent them, by the hand of Jeremiah, as the judge *ſet over the nations*, chap. i. 10. to paſs this ſentence upon them: And by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, as the executioner. What a much greater figure then doth the poor prophet make, than what the potent prince makes, if we look upon their relation to God, though in the eye of the world it was the reverſe of it. Jeremiah muſt *take the cup at God's hand*, and compel the nations *to drink it.* He foretels no hurt to them, but what God appoints him to foretel, and what is foretold by a divine authority, will certainly be fulfilled by a divine power.

3. On whom it ſhould be ſent; on all the nations within the verge of Iſrael's acquaintance, and the lines of their communication. Jeremiah took the cup, and *made all the nations to drink of it*, i. e. he propheſied concerning each of the nations here mentioned, that they ſhould ſhare in this great deſolation that was coming. *Jeruſalem and the cities of Judah* are put firſt, *ver.* 18. for *judgment begins at the houſe of God*, 1 Pet. iv. 17. at the ſanctuary, *Ezek.* ix. 6. Whether Nebuchadrezzar had his eye principally upon Jeruſalem and Judah in this expedition or no, doth not appear; probably he had; for it was as conſiderable as any of the nations here mentioned; however, God had his eye principally to them. And this part of the prophecy was already begun to be accompliſhed, which that melancholy parentheſis ſpeaks, *(as it is this day)* for in the fourth year of Jehoiakim things were come into a very ill poſture, and all the foundations were out of courſe. *Pharaoh, king of Egypt*, comes next, becauſe the Jews truſted to that broken reed, *ver.* 19. the remains of them fled to Egypt, and there Jeremiah particularly foretold the deſtruction of that country, *chap.* xliii. 10, 11. All the other nations that bordered upon Canaan muſt pledge Jeruſalem in this bitter cup, this cup of trembling. The *mingled people*, the Arabians, ſo ſome; ſome rovers of divers nations that lived by rapine, ſo others; *the kings of the land of Uz*, joined to the country of the Edomites. The Philiſtines had been vexatious to Iſrael, but now their cities, and their lords, become a prey to this mighty conqueror. Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Zidon, are places well known to border upon Iſrael: The *Iſles beyond* or *beſide the ſea*, are ſuppoſed to be thoſe parts of Phœnicia and Syria, that lay upon the coaſt of the Mediterranean ſea. Dedan, and the other countries mentioned, *ver.* 23, 24. ſeem to have lain upon the confines of Idumea and Arabia the deſert. Thoſe of Elam are the Perſians, with whom the Medes are joined, now looked upon as inconſiderable, and yet afterwards were able to make reprizals upon Babylon for themſelves and all their neighbours. The *kings of the north*, that lay nearer to Babylon, and others that lay at ſome diſtance, will be ſure to be ſeized on, and made a prey of by the victorious ſword of Nebuchadrezzar. Nay, He ſhall puſh on his victories with ſuch incredible fury and ſucceſs, that all the kingdoms of the world that were then and there known, ſhould have become ſacrifices to his ambition. Thus Alexander is ſaid to conquer the world, and the Roman empire is called *the world*, Luke ii. 1. or it may be taken as reading the doom of *all the kingdoms* of this earth, one time or other they ſhall feel the dreadful effects of war. The world has been, and will be, a great cock-pit, while mens luſts war as they do *in their members*, Jam. iv. 1. But that the conquerors may ſee their fate with the conquered, it concludes, *the king of Sheſhach ſhall drink after them*, i. e. the king of Babylon himſelf, that has given his neighbours all this trouble and vexation, ſhall at length have it return upon his own head. That by Sheſhach is meant Babylon, is plain from *chap.* li. 41. but whether it was another name of the ſame city, or the name of another city of the ſame kingdom, is uncertain. Babylon's ruin was foretold, *ver.* 12, 13. and upon this prophecy of its being the author of the ruin of ſo many nations, it is very fitly repeated here again.

4. What ſhould be the effect of it. The deſolations which the ſwords ſhould make in all theſe kingdoms, are repreſented by the conſequences of exceſſive drinking, *ver.* 16. *They ſhall drink, and be moved, and be mad.* And *ver.* 27. *They ſhall be drunken, and ſpue, and fall, and riſe no more.* Now this may ſerve, (1.) To make us loath the ſin of drunkenneſs, that the conſequences of it are made uſe of to ſet forth a moſt woful and miſerable condition. Drunkenneſs deprives men for the preſent of the uſe of their reaſon, makes them mad. It takes from them, likewiſe, that which, next to reaſon, is the moſt valuable bleſſing, and that is, health; it makes them ſick, and endangers the bones and the life. Men in drink often *fall and riſe no more:* It is a ſin that is its own puniſhment. How wretchedly are they intoxicated and beſotted, that ſuffer themſelves at any time to be intoxicated, eſpecially to be by the frequent commiſſion of this ſin beſotted with wine or ſtrong drink! (2.) To make us dread the judgments of war. When God ſends the ſword upon a nation with warrant to make it deſolate, it ſoon becomes like a drunken man, filled with confuſion at the alarms of war, put into a hurry; its counſellors *mad*, and at their wits end, ſtaggering in all the meaſures they take, all the motions they make; ſick at heart with continual vexation; *vomiting up the riches* they have greedily *ſwallowed down*, Job xx. 15. *falling* down before the enemy, and as unable to get up again, or do any thing to help themſelves, as a man *dead drunk is*, Hab. ii. 16.

5. The undoubted certainty of it, with the reaſon given for it, *ver.* 28, 29. They will *refuſe to take the cup at thy hand*; not only they will be loth that the judgment ſhould come, but they will be loth to believe that ever it will come; they will not give credit to the predictions of ſo deſpicable a man as Jeremiah; but tell them, it is *the word of the Lord of hoſts*, he hath ſaid it; and it is in vain for them to ſtruggle with Omnipotence, *ye ſhall certainly drink*; and give them this reaſon, it is a time of viſitation, it is a reckoning day, and Jeruſalem has been called to an account already; *I begin to bring evil on the city that is called by my name*; its relation to me will not exempt it from puniſhment; and *ſhould ye be utterly unpuniſhed!* No, *If this be done in the green tree, what ſhall be done in the dry?* If they that have ſome good in them ſmart ſo ſeverely for the evil that is found in them, can they expect to eſcape that have worſe evils, and no good found among them? If Jeruſalem be puniſhed for learning idolatry of the nations, ſhall not the nations be puniſhed of whom they learned it? No doubt they ſhall, *I will call for a ſword upon all the inhabitants of the earth*; for they have helped to debauch the inhabitants of Jeruſalem.

Upon this whole matter we may obſerve, (1.) That there is a God that judgeth in the earth, to whom all the nations of the earth are accountable, and by whoſe judgment they muſt abide. (2.) That God can eaſily bring to ruin the greateſt nations, the moſt numerous and powerful, and ſuch as have been moſt ſecure. (3.) That thoſe who have been vexatious and miſchievous to the people of God, will be reckoned with for it at laſt. Many of theſe nations had in their turns given diſturbance to Iſrael, but now comes deſtruction on them. The year of the redeemer will come, even the *year of recompences* for the controverſy of Zion. (4.) That the *burden of the word of the Lord* will at laſt become the burden of his judgments. Iſaiah had propheſied long ſince againſt moſt of theſe nations, *chap.* xiii, &c. and now, at length, all his prophecies will have their compleat fulfilling. (5.) That thoſe who are ambitious of power and dominion, commonly become the troublers of the earth, and the plagues of their generation; ſo Nebuchadrezzar was, ſo proud of his might, that he had no ſenſe of right. Theſe are the men that turned the world upſide down, and yet expect to be admired and adored. Alexander thought himſelf a great prince, when others thought him no better than a great pirate. (6) That the greateſt pomp and power in this world is of very uncertain continuance. Before Nebuchadrezzar's greater force, kings themſelves muſt yield, and become captives.

30. Therefore propheſy thou againſt them all theſe words, and ſay unto them, The LORD ſhall roar from on high, and utter his voice from his holy habitation, he ſhall mightily roar upon his habitation, he ſhall give a ſhout, as they that tread *the grapes*, againſt all the inhabitants of the earth. 31. A noiſe ſhall come *even* to the ends of the earth; for the LORD hath a controverſy with the nations: he will plead with all fleſh, he will give them that are wicked to the ſword, ſaith the LORD. 32. Thus ſaith the LORD of hoſts, Behold, evil ſhall go forth from nation to nation, and a great whirlwind ſhall be raiſed up from the coaſts of the earth. 33. And the ſlain of the LORD ſhall be at that day from *one* end of the earth even unto the *other* end of the earth: they ſhall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried, they ſhall be dung upon the ground. 34. ¶ Howl, ye ſhepherd, and cry, and wallow yourſelves *in the aſhes*, ye principal of the flock: for the days of your ſlaughter, and of your diſperſions, are accompliſhed, and ye ſhall fall like a pleaſant veſſel. 35. And the ſhepherds ſhall have no way to flee, nor the principal of the flock to eſcape. 36. A voice of the cry of the ſhepherds, and an howling of the principal of the flock *ſhall be heard:* for the LORD hath ſpoiled their paſture. 37. And the peaceable habitations are cut down, becauſe of the fierce anger of the LORD. 38. He hath forſaken his covert, as the lion: for their land is deſolate becauſe of the fierceneſs of the oppreſſor, and becauſe of his fierce anger.

We have in theſe verſes a further deſcription of thoſe terrible deſolations which the king of Babylon, with his armies, ſhould make in all the countries and nations round about Jeruſalem. In Jeruſalem God had erected his temple; there were his oracles and ordinances, which the neighbouring nations ſhould have attended to, and

and might have received benefit by; thither they ſhould have applied themſelves for the knowledge of God and their duty, and then they might have had reaſon to bleſs God for their neighbourhood to Jeruſalem; but they, inſtead of that, taking all opportunities either to debauch or to diſturb that holy city, when God came to reckon with Jeruſalem, becauſe it learned ſo much of the *way of the nations*, he reckoned with the nations becauſe they learned ſo little of the way of Jeruſalem.

They will ſoon be aware of Nebuchadrezzar's making war upon them: But the prophet is here bidden to tell them, that it is God himſelf that makes war upon them, a God with whom there is no contending.

1. The war is here proclaimed, *ver.* 30. *The Lord ſhall war from on high*; not *from mount Zion and Jeruſalem*, as *Joel* iii. 16. *Amos* i. 2. but from *heaven*, from *his holy habitation* there; for now Jeruſalem is one of the places againſt which he roars: *he ſhall mightily roar upon his habitation* on earth, from that above. He has been long ſilent, and ſeemed not to take notice of the wickedneſs of the nations; the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now *he ſhall give a ſhout*, as the aſſailants in battle do, *againſt all the inhabitants of the earth*, to whom it ſhall be a ſhout of terror, and yet a ſhout of joy in heaven, as theirs that *tread the grapes*; for when God is reckoning with the proud enemies of his kingdom among men, there is a *great voice of much people heard in heaven, ſaying, Hallelujah*, Rev. xix. 1. He *roars as a lion*, Amos iii. 4, 8. as a lion that has *forſaken his covert*, ver. 38. and is going abroad to ſeek his prey, upon which he roars, that he may the more eaſily ſeize it.

2. The manifeſto is here publiſhed, ſhewing the cauſes and reaſons why God proclaims this war, *ver.* 31. *The Lord hath a controverſy with the nations*; he has juſt cauſe to contend with them, and he will take this way of pleading with them. His quarrel with them is, in one word, for their wickedneſs, their contempt of him, and his authority over them, and kindneſs to them, *He will give them that are wicked to the ſword.* They have provoked God to anger, and thence comes all this deſtruction; it is *becauſe of the fierce anger of the Lord*, ver. 37. and again, *ver.* 38. the *fierceneſs of the oppreſſor*; or, as it might better be read, *the fierceneſs of the oppreſſing ſword*, (for the word is feminine) is *becauſe of his fierce anger*: And we are ſure he is never angry without cauſe; but *who knows the power of his anger.*

3. The alarm is here given and taken; *A noiſe will come even to the ends of the earth*, ſo loud ſhall it roar, ſo far ſhall it reach, *ver.* 31. The alarm is not given by ſound of trumpet, or beat of drum, but by a *whirlwind, a great whirlwind, ſtorm*, or *tempeſt*, which ſhall be *raiſed up from the coaſts*, the remote coaſts, *of the earth*, ver. 32. The Chaldean army ſhall be like a hurricane, raiſed in the north, but thence carried on with incredible fierceneſs and ſwiftneſs, bearing down all before it. It is like the *whirlwind*, out of which God anſwered Job, which was exceeding terrible, *Job* xxxvii. 1. and xxxviii. 1. And when the wrath of God thus roars like a lion from heaven, no marvel if it be echoed with ſhrieks from earth; for who can chooſe but tremble when God thus ſpeaks in diſpleaſure; ſee *Hoſea* xi. 10. Now the ſhepherds ſhall *howl and cry*, the kings and princes, and great ones of the earth, the *principal of the flock*, though they uſe to be the moſt courageous and ſecure, yet now their hearts ſhall fail them, *They ſhall wallow themſelves in the aſhes*, ver. 34. Seeing themſelves utterly unable to make head againſt the enemy, and ſeeing their country, which they have the charge of, and a concern for, inevitably ruined, they ſhall abandon themſelves to ſorrow. There ſhall be *a voice of the cry of the ſhepherds*, and a *howling of the principal of the flock ſhall be heard*, ver. 36. Thoſe are great calamities indeed, that ſtrike ſuch a terror upon the great men, and put them into this mighty conſternation. *The Lord hath ſpoiled their paſture*, in which they fed their flock, and out of which they fed themſelves; the ſpoiling of that makes them cry out thus. Perhaps carrying on the metaphor of a lion roaring, it alludes to the great fright that ſhepherds are in, when they hear a roaring lion coming towards their flocks, and find they have *no way to flee*, ver. 35. for their own ſafety, neither can the *principal of their flock eſcape.* The enemy will be ſo numerous, ſo furious, ſo ſedulous, and the extent of their armies ſo vaſt, that it will be impoſſible to avoid falling into their hands. Note, As we cannot out-face, ſo we cannot out-run the judgments of God. This is that for which the ſhepherds *howl and cry.*

4. The progreſs of this war is here deſcribed, *ver.* 32. *Behold, evil ſhall go forth from nation to nation*; as the cup goes round, every nation ſhall have its ſhare, and take its turn, becauſe one doth not take warning by the calamities of another, to repent and reform. Nay, as if this were to be a little repreſentation of the laſt and general judgment, it ſhall reach *from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth.* ver. 33. The day of vengeance is in his heart, and now *his hand ſhall find out all his enemies*, wherever they are, *Pſal.* xxi. 8. Note, When our neighbour's houſe is on fire, it is time to be concerned for our own. When one nation is a ſeat of war, every neighbour-nation ſhould hear and fear, and make its peace with God.

5. The diſmal conſequences of this war are here foretold, *The days of ſlaughter and diſperſions are accompliſhed*, i. e. they are fully come, *ver.* 34. the time fixed in the divine counſel for the *ſlaughter* of ſome, and the *diſperſion* of the reſt, which will make the nations compleatly deſolate. Multitudes ſhall fall by the ſword of the mercileſs Chaldeans. ſo that *the ſlain of the Lord* ſhall be every where found: they are ſlain by commiſſion from him, and are ſacrificed to his juſtice. The ſlain for ſin are the *ſlain of the Lord.* And, to compleat the miſery of their ſlaughter, *they ſhall not be lamented* in particular; ſo general ſhall the matter of lamentation be: Nay, they ſhall not *be gathered* up, nor *buried*, for they ſhall have no friends left to do it, and the enemies ſhall not have ſo much humanity in them as to do it; and then they ſhall be *as dung upon the earth*, ſo vile and noiſom: And it is well, if, as dung manures the earth, and makes it fruitful, ſo theſe horrid ſpectacles, which lie as monuments of divine juſtice, might be a means to awaken the inhabitants of the earth to *learn righteouſneſs.* The effect of this war will be the *deſolation of the whole land* that is the ſeat of it, *ver.* 38. one land after another. But here are two expreſſions more, that ſeem to make the caſe in a particular manner piteous. (1.) *Ye ſhall fall like a pleaſant veſſel*, ver. 34. The moſt deſirable perſons among them, that moſt valued themſelves, and were moſt valued, ſhall fall by the ſword; that were looked upon as *veſſels of honour.* Ye ſhall fall as a Venice glaſs, or a China diſh, which is ſoon broken all to pieces; even the tender and delicate ſhall ſhare in the common calamity; the ſword devours one as well as another. (2.) Even *the peaceable habitations are cut down.* Thoſe that uſe to be quiet, and not moleſted, the habitations in which ye have long dwelt in peace, ſhall now be no longer ſuch, but *cut down* by the war: Or, Thoſe that uſed to be quiet, and not moleſting any of their neighbours, thoſe that lived in peace, eaſily, and gave no provocation to any, yet ſhall not eſcape. This is one of the direful effects of war, that even thoſe who were moſt harmleſs and inoffenſive, yet ſuffer hard things. Bleſſed be God, there is a *peaceable habitation* above for all the ſons of peace, which is out of the reach of fire and ſword.

CHAP. XXVI.

As in the hiſtory of the Acts of the Apoſtles, *that of their preaching and that of their ſuffering is interwoven, ſo it is in the account we have of the prophet Jeremiah; witneſs this chapter, where we are told (1.) How faithfully he preached*, ver. 1,—6. *(2.) How ſpitefully he was perſecuted for ſo doing by the prieſts and the prophets*, ver. 7,—11. *(3.) How bravely he ſtood to his doctrine in the face of his perſecutors*, ver. 12,—15. *(4.) How wonderfully he was protected and delivered by the prudence of the princes and elders*, ver. 16,—19. *Though Urijah, another prophet, was about the ſame time put to death by Jehoiakim*, ver. 20,—23. *yet Jeremiah met with thoſe that ſheltered him*, ver. 24.

1. IN the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the ſon of Joſiah king of Judah, came this word from the LORD, ſaying, 2. Thus ſaith the LORD, Stand in the court of the LORDS houſe, and ſpeak unto all the cities of Judah, which come to worſhip in the LORDS houſe, all the words that I command thee to ſpeak unto them; diminiſh not a word: 3. If ſo be they will hearken, and turn every man from his evil way, that I may repent me of the evil which I purpoſe to do unto them, becauſe of the evil of their doings. 4. And thou ſhalt ſay unto them, Thus ſaith the LORD, If ye will not hearken to me to walk in my law, which I have ſet before you, 5. To hearken to the words of my ſervants the prophets, whom I ſent unto you, both riſing up early, and ſending *them* (but ye have not hearkened) 6. Then will I make this houſe like Shiloh, and will make this city a curſe to all the nations of the earth.

We have here the ſermon that Jeremiah preached, which gave ſuch offence, that he was in danger of loſing his life for it. It is here left upon record, as it were by way of appeal to the judgment of impartial men in all ages, whether Jeremiah was worthy to die for delivering ſuch a meſſage as this from God, and whether his perſecutors were not very wicked and unreaſonable men.

1. God directed him where to preach this ſermon, and when, and to what auditory, *ver.* 2. Let not any cenſure Jeremiah as indiſcreet in the choice of place and time, nor ſay he might have delivered his meſſage more privately, in a corner, among his friends that he could confide in, and that he deſerved to ſmart for not acting more cautiouſly; for God gave him orders to preach *in the court of the Lord's houſe*, which was within the peculiar juriſdiction of his ſworn enemies the prieſts, and who would therefore take themſelves to be in a particular manner affronted. He muſt preach this, as it ſhould ſeem, at the time of one of the moſt ſolemn feſtivals, when perſons were come from all the *cities of Judah* to *worſhip in the Lord's houſe.* Theſe worſhippers, we may ſuppoſe, had a great veneration for their prieſts, would credit the character they gave of men, and be exaſperated againſt thoſe whom they put into an ill name, and con-

conſequently ſide with them, and ſtrengthen their hands againſt Jeremiah: But none of theſe things muſt move him, or daunt him; in the face of all this danger he muſt preach this ſermon, which, if it were not convincing, would be very provoking. And becauſe the prophet might be in ſome temptation to palliate the matter, and make it better to his hearers than God had made it to him, to exchange an offenſive expreſſion for one more plauſible, therefore God chargeth him particularly *not to diminiſh a word*, but to ſpeak all the things, nay, and *all the words* that he had commanded him. Note, God's ambaſſadors muſt keep cloſe to their inſtructions, and not in the leaſt vary from them, either to pleaſe men, or to ſave themſelves harmleſs: They muſt neither *add* nor *diminiſh*, Deut. iv. 2.

2. God directed him what to preach, and it is that which could not give offence to any, but ſuch as were reſolved to go on ſtill in their treſpaſſes.

1. He muſt aſſure them, that if they would *repent of their ſins*, and turn from them, though they were in imminent danger of ruin, and deſolating judgments were juſt at the door, yet a ſtop ſhould be put to them, and God would proceed no further in his controverſy with them, *ver.* 3. this was the main thing God intended in ſending him to them, to try if they would return from their ſins, that ſo God might turn from his anger, and turn away the judgments that threatned them; which he was not only willing, but very deſirous to do, as ſoon as he could do it without prejudice to the honour of his juſtice and holineſs. See how God *waits to be gracious*, waits till we are duly qualified, till we are fit for him to be gracious to, and in the mean time tries variety of methods to bring us to be ſo.

2. He muſt on the other hand aſſure them, that if they continue obſtinate to all the calls God gave them, and would perſiſt in their diſobedience, it would certainly end in the ruin of their city and temple, *ver.* 4, 5, 6. (1.) That which God required of them was, that they ſhould be obſervant of what he had ſaid to them, both by the written word, and by his miniſters; that they ſhould *walk in all his law which he ſet before them*, the law of Moſes, and the ordinances and commandments of it; and that they ſhould *hearken to the words of his ſervants the prophets*, who preſſed nothing upon them but what was agreeable to the law of Moſes, that was *ſet before them*, as a touchſtone to try the ſpirits by; and by this they were diſtinguiſhed from the falſe prophets, who drew them from the law, inſtead of drawing them to it. The law was what God himſelf *ſet before them:* The prophets were *his own ſervants*, and were immediately ſent by him to them, and ſent with a great deal of care and concern, *riſing early to ſend them*, leſt they ſhould come too late, when their prejudices had got poſſeſſion, and were become invincible. They had hitherto been deaf both to the law and to the prophets, *ye have not hearkned*; all he expects now is, that at length they ſhould heed what he ſaid, and make his word their rule. A reaſonable demand! (2.) That which is threatned in caſe of refuſal is, that this city, and the temple in it, ſhall fare as their predeceſſors did, Shiloh and the tabernacle there, for a like refuſal to walk in God's law, and hearken to his prophets, then when the preſent diſpenſation of prophecy juſt began in Samuel. Now could a ſentence be expreſt more unexceptionably? Is it not a rule of juſtice, *ut parium par ſit ratio?* If Jeruſalem be like Shiloh, in reſpect of ſin, why ſhould it not be like Shiloh in reſpect of puniſhment? Can any other be expected? This was not the firſt time he had given them warning to this purpoſe; ſee *chap.* vii. 12, 13, 14. When the temple, which was the glory of Jeruſalem, was deſtroyed, the city was thereby *made a curſe*; for the temple was that which made it a bleſſing. *If the ſalt loſe* that *ſavour, it is thenceforth good for nothing.* It ſhall be *a curſe*, i. e. it ſhall be the pattern of a curſe; if a man would curſe any city, he would ſay, *God make it like Jeruſalem!* Note, Thoſe that will not be ſubject to the commands of God, make themſelves ſubject to the curſe of God.

7 So the prieſts, and the prophets, and all the people, heard Jeremiah ſpeaking theſe words in the houſe of the LORD. 8. ¶ Now it came to paſs, when Jeremiah had made an end of ſpeaking all that the LORD had commanded *him* to ſpeak unto all the people, that the prieſts, and the prophets, and all the people took him, ſaying, Thou ſhalt ſurely die. 9. Why haſt thou propheſied in the name of the LORD, ſaying, This houſe ſhall be like Shiloh, and this city ſhall be deſolate without an inhabitant? and all the people were gathered againſt Jeremiah, in the houſe of the LORD. 10. ¶ When the princes of Judah heard theſe things, then they came up from the kings houſe unto the houſe of the LORD, and ſat down in the entry of the new gate of the LORDs *houſe*. 11. Then ſpake the prieſts, and the prophets unto the princes, and to all the people, ſaying, This man *is* worthy to die, for he hath propheſied againſt this city, as ye have heard with your ears. 12. ¶ Then ſpake Jeremiah unto all the princes, and to all the people, ſaying, The LORD ſent me to propheſy againſt this houſe, and againſt this city, all the words that ye have heard. 13. Therefore now amend your ways, and your doings, and obey the voice of the LORD your God, and the LORD will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced againſt you. 14. As for me, behold, I *am* in your hand: to do with me as ſeemeth good and meet unto you. 15. But know ye for certain, that if ye put me to death, ye ſhall ſurely bring innocent blood upon your ſelves, and upon this city, and upon the inhabitants thereof: for of a truth the LORD hath ſent me unto you, to ſpeak all theſe words in your ears.

One would have hoped, that ſuch a ſermon as that in the foregoing verſes, ſo plain and practical, ſo rational and pathetical, and delivered in God's name, ſhould have wrought upon even this people, eſpecially meeting them now at their devotions, and ſhould have prevailed with them to repent and reform; but inſtead of awakening their convictions, it did but exaſperate their corruptions, as appears by this account of the effect of it.

1. Jeremiah is charged with it as a crime, that he had preached ſuch a ſermon, and is apprehended for it as a criminal. The *prieſts*, and *falſe prophets*, and *people heard him ſpeak theſe words*, ver. 7. And it ſeems they had patience to hear him out, did not diſturb him when he was preaching, nor give him any interruption till he had *made an end of ſpeaking all that the Lord commanded him to ſpeak:* So far they were fairer with him than ſome of the perſecutors of God's miniſters have been; they let him ſay all he had to ſay, and yet perhaps with an ill deſign, in hopes to have ſomething worſe yet to lay to his charge: But having no worſe, this ſhall ſuffice to ground an indictment upon: He hath ſaid, *This houſe ſhall be like Shiloh.* See how unfair they are in repreſenting his words: He had ſaid in God's name, *If ye will not hearkon to me, then will I make this houſe like Shiloh*; but they leave out God's hand in the deſolation, *I will make* it ſo, and their own hand in it, in not hearkening to the voice of God, and charged it upon him, that he *blaſphemed this holy place*; the crime charged both on our Lord Jeſus and on Stephen, that he ſaid, *This houſe ſhall be like Shiloh.* Well might he complain, as David doth, *Pſal.* lvi. 5. *Every day they wreſt my words*; and we muſt not think it ſtrange, if we, and what we ſay and do, be thus miſrepreſented. And when the accuſation was ſo weakly grounded, no marvel that the ſentence paſſed upon it was unjuſt, *Thou ſhalt ſurely die.* What he had ſaid agreed with what God had ſaid, when he took poſſeſſion of the temple, 1 *Kings* ix. 6, 7, 8. *If you ſhall at all turn from following after me, then this houſe ſhall be* abandoned, and yet he is condemned to die for ſaying it. It is not out of any concern for the honour of the temple that they appear thus warm, but becauſe they are reſolved not to part with their ſins, in which they flatter themſelves with a conceit, that the *temple of the Lord* will protect them; therefore right or wrong, *Thou ſhalt ſurely die.* This outcry of the prieſts and prophets raiſed the mob, and *all the people were gathered together againſt Jeremiah*, in a popular tumult, ready to pull him to pieces; were *gathered about him*, ſo ſome read it; they flocked together, ſome crying one thing, and ſome another. *The people* that were at firſt preſent, were hot againſt him, *ver.* 8. but their clamours drew more together, only to ſee what the matter was.

2. He is arraigned and indicted for it before the higheſt court of judicature they had. Here, (1.) The *princes of Judah* were his judges, *ver.* 10. Thoſe that filled the thrones of judgment, *the thrones of the houſe of David*, the elders of Iſrael, they hearing of this tumult in the temple, *came up from the king's houſe*, where they uſually ſat near the court, *to the houſe of the Lord*, to enquire into this matter, and to ſee that nothing was done diſorderly. They *ſat down in the entry of the new gate of the Lord's houſe*, and held a court as it were by a ſpecial commiſſion of Oyer and Terminer. (2.) The *prieſts and prophets* were his perſecutors and accuſers, and were violently ſet againſt him. They appealed to *the princes*, and *to all the people*, to the court and the jury, whether *this man* be not *worthy to die*, ver. 11. The corrupt prieſts and counterfeit prophets have always been the moſt bitter enemies of the prophets of the Lord; they had ends of their own to ſerve, which they thought ſuch preaching as this would be an obſtruction to. When Jeremiah propheſied in the houſe of the king concereing the fall of the royal family, *chap.* xxii. 1. the court, though very corrupt, bore it patiently, and we do not find they perſecuted him for it; but when he comes into the *houſe of the Lord*, and toucheth the copy-hold of the prieſts, and contradicts the lies and flatteries of the falſe prophets, then he is adjudged *worthy to die.* For the prophets *propheſied falſely*, and the *prieſts bore rule by their means*, Jer. 5. *ult.* Obſerve, When Jeremiah is indicted before the princes, the ſtreſs of his accuſation is laid upon what he ſaid concerning the city, becauſe they thought the princes would be moſt concerned about that. But concerning the words ſpoken, they appeal to the people, *Ye have heard* what he hath ſaid, let it be given in evidence.

3. Je-

3. Jeremiah makes his defence before the princes and the people. He doth not go about to deny the words, or to diminiſh ought from them, what he hath ſaid he will ſtand to, though it coſt him his life, and owns he had propheſied againſt *this houſe*, and *this city*. But,

1. He aſſerts, that he did this by a good authority; not maliciouſly or ſeditiouſly, not out of any ill-will to his country, or any diſaffection to the government in church or ſtate, but, *The Lord ſent me* to propheſy thus; ſo he begins his apology, *ver.* 12. and ſo he concludes it, for this is that he reſolves to abide by as ſufficient to bear him out, *ver.* 15. *Of a truth the Lord hath ſent me unto you, to ſpeak all theſe words.* As long as miniſters keep cloſe to the inſtructions they have from heaven, they need not fear the oppoſition they may meet with from hell or earth. He pleads he is but a meſſenger, and if he faithfully deliver his meſſage, he muſt bear no blame; but he is a meſſenger from the Lord, to whom they were accountable as well as he, and therefore might demand regard. If he ſpeak but what God appointed him to ſpeak, he is under the divine protection, and whatever affront they offer to the ambaſſador, will be reſented by the prince that ſent him.

2. He ſhews them that he did it with a good deſign, and that it was their fault if they did not make a good uſe of it. It was ſaid not by way of fatal ſentence, but of fair warning; if they would take the warning, they might prevent the execution of the ſentence, *ver.* 13. Shall I take it ill of a man that tells me of my danger while I have an opportunity of avoiding it, and not rather return him thanks for it, as the greateſt kindneſs he could do me? *I have* indeed (ſaith *Jeremiah*) propheſied *againſt this city*, but *if you will now amend your ways and your doings*, the threatned ruin ſhall be prevented, which was the thing I aimed at in giving you the warning. Thoſe are very unjuſt, who complain of miniſters for preaching hell and damnation, when it is only to keep them from that place of torment, and bring them to heaven and ſalvation.

3. He therefore warns them of their danger if they proceed againſt him; *ver.* 14. *As for me*, the matter is not great what becomes of me; *Behold, I am in your hand*; you know I am; I neither have any power, nor can make any intereſt to oppoſe you, neither is it ſo much my concern to ſave my own life; *do with me as ſeemeth meet unto you*, if I be led to the ſlaughter, it ſhall be as a lamb. Note, It becomes God's miniſters, that are warm in preaching, to be calm in ſuffering, and to carry it ſubmiſſively to the powers that are over them, though they be perſecuting powers. But for themſelves, he tells them, it is at their peril if they put him to death, *Ye ſhall ſurely bring innocent blood upon yourſelves, ver.* 15. They might think that killing the prophet would help to defeat the prophecy, but they would prove wretchedly deceived, it would but add to their guilt, and aggravate their ruin. Their own conſciences could not but tell them, that if Jeremiah was (as certainly he was) ſent of God to bring them this meſſage, it was at their utmoſt peril if they treated him for it as a malefactor. Thoſe that perſecute God's miniſters, hurt not them ſo much as themſelves.

16. ¶ Then ſaid the princes, and all the people unto the prieſts, and to the prophets; This man *is* not worthy to die: for he hath ſpoken to us in the name of the LORD our God. 17. Then roſe up certain of the elders of the land, and ſpake to all the aſſembly of the people, ſaying, 18. Micah the Moraſthite propheſied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and ſpake to all the people of Judah, ſaying, Thus ſaith the LORD of hoſts, Zion ſhall be plowed *like* a field, and Jeruſalem ſhall become heaps, and the mountain of the houſe, as the high places of the foreſt. 19. Did Hezekiah king of Judah, and all Judah put him at all to death? did he not fear the LORD, and beſought the LORD, and the LORD repented him of the evil which he had pronounced againſt them? Thus might we procure great evil againſt our ſouls. 20. And there was alſo a man that propheſied in the name of the LORD, Urijah the ſon of Shemaiah of Kirjath-jearim, who propheſied againſt this city, and againſt this land, according to all the words of Jeremiah. 21. And when Jehoiakim the king, with all his mighty men, and all the princes heard his words, the king ſought to put him to death; but when Urijah heard it, he was afraid, and fled, and went into Egypt. 22. And Jehoiakim the king ſent men into Egypt, *namely*, Elnathan the ſon of Achbor, and *certain* men with him into Egypt. 23. And they fet forth Urijah out of Egypt, and brought him unto Jehoiakim the king, who ſlew him with the ſword, and caſt his dead body into the graves of the common people. 24. Nevertheleſs, the hand of Ahikam the ſon of Shaphan was with Jeremiah, that they ſhould not give him into the hand of the people to put him to death.

Here is, 1. The acquitting of Jeremiah from the charge exhibited againſt him. He had indeed ſpoken the words as they were laid in the indictment, but they are not looked upon to be ſeditious, or treaſonable, ill intended, or of any ill tendency, and therefore the court and country agree to find him not guilty. The *prieſts* and *prophets*, notwithſtanding his rational plea for himſelf, continued to demand judgment againſt him; but the *princes*, and *all the people* are clear in it, *That this man is not worthy to die*, ver. 16. for (ſay they) *he hath ſpoken to us*, not of himſelf, but *in the name of the Lord our God*. And are they willing to own, that he did indeed ſpeak to them *in the name of the Lord*, and that that Lord is their God? why then did they not amend their ways and doings, and take the method he preſcribed to prevent the ruin of their country? If they ſay his prophecy is *from heaven*, it may juſtly be asked, *Why did ye not then believe him?* Mat. xxi. 25. Note, It is pity that thoſe who are ſo far convinced of the divine original of goſpel-preaching, as to protect it from the malice of others, do not ſubmit to the power and influence of it themſelves.

2. A precedent quoted to juſtify them in acquitting Jeremiah. Some of the *elders of the land*, either the princes before mentioned, or the more intelligent men of the people, ſtood up, and put the aſſembly in mind of a former caſe, as is uſual with us in giving judgment; for the wiſdom of our predeceſſors is a direction to us. The caſe referred to is that of Micah: We have extant the book of his prophecy among the minor prophets. (1.) Was it thought ſtrange, that Jeremiah propheſied againſt this city, and the temple? Micah did ſo before him, even in the reign of Hezekiah, that reign of reformation, *ver.* 18. Micah ſaid it as publickly, as Jeremiah had now ſpoken to the ſame purpoſe, *Zion ſhall be plowed like a field*, the building ſhall be all deſtroyed, ſo that nothing ſhall hinder but it may be plowed; *Jeruſalem ſhall become heaps* of ruins, and *the mountain of the houſe*, on which the temple is built, ſhall be *as the high places of the foreſt*, overrun with briers and thorns. That prophet not only ſpoke this, but wrote it, and left it on record: we find it, *Mic.* iii. 12. By this it appears, that a man may be, as Micah was, a true prophet of the Lord, and yet may propheſy the deſtruction of Zion and Jeruſalem. When we threaten ſecure ſinners with the taking away of the Spirit of God and the kingdom of God from them, and declining churches with the removal of the candleſtick, we ſay no more than what has been ſaid many a time, and what we have warrant from the word of God to ſay. (2.) Was it thought fit by the princes to juſtify Jeremiah in what he had done? It was what Hezekiah did before them in a like caſe. Did Hezekiah, and the people of Judah, *i. e.* the repreſentatives of the people, the commons in parliament, did they complain of Micah the prophet? Did they impeach him, or make an act to ſilence him, and put him to death? No, on the contrary, they took the warning he gave them: Hezekiah, that renowned prince, of bleſſed memory, ſet a good example before his ſucceſſors, for he *feared the Lord*, as Noah, who being *warned of God of things not ſeen as yet*, was *moved with fear*. Micah's preaching drove him to his knees; he *beſought the Lord* to turn away the judgment threatned, and to be reconciled to them; and he found it was not in vain to do ſo, for *the Lord repented him of the evil*, and returned in mercy to them; ſent an angel, who routed the army of the Aſſyrians, that threatned to have plowed *Zion like a field*, ver. 19. Hezekiah got good by the preaching, and then, you may be ſure, he would do no harm to the preacher. Theſe elders conclude, that it would be of dangerous conſequence to the ſtate, if they ſhould gratify the importunity of the prieſts and prophets, in putting Jeremiah to death; *Thus might we procure great evil againſt our ſouls.* Note, It is good to frighten ourſelves from ſin, with the conſideration of the miſchief we ſhall certainly do to ourſelves by it, and the irreparable damage it will be to our own ſouls.

3. Here is an inſtance of another prophet that was put to death by Jehoiakim, for propheſying as Jeremiah had done, *ver.* 20. *&c.* Some make this to be urged by the perſecutors, as a caſe that favoured the proſecution, a modern caſe, in which ſpeaking ſuch words as Jeremiah had ſpoken was adjudged treaſon. Others think the elders, that were advocates for Jeremiah, alledged this, to ſhew that thus they might *procure great evil againſt their ſouls*, for it would be adding ſin to ſin; Jehoiakim the preſent king had ſlain one prophet already, let them not fill up the meaſure, by ſlaying another. Hezekiah that protected Micah proſpered; but did Jehoiakim proſper, that ſlew Urijah? No, they all ſaw the contrary. As good examples, and the good conſequences of them, ſhould encourage us in that which is good, ſo the examples of bad men, and the bad conſequences of them, ſhould deter us from that which is evil. But ſome good interpreters take this narrative from the hiſtorian that penned the book, Jeremiah himſelf, or Baruch, who, to make Jeremiah's deliverance by means of the princes the more wonderful, takes notice of this paſſage that happened about the ſame time, for both were in the reign of Jehoiakim, and this *in the beginning of* his *reign*, ver. 1. Obſerve, (1.) Urijah's prophecy, it was *againſt this city, and this land, according to all the words of Jeremiah.* The prophets of the Lord agreed in their teſtimony,

and one would have thought, that out of the mouth of ſo many witneſſes, the word ſhould have been regarded. (2.) The proſecution of him for it, *ver.* 21. Jehoiakim and his courtiers were exaſperated againſt him, and *ſought to put him to death*, in this wicked deſign the king himſelf was principally concerned. (3.) His abſconding thereupon. *When he heard* that the king was become his enemy, and ſought his life, *he was afraid, and fled, and went into Egypt.* This was certainly his fault, and an effect of the weakneſs of his faith, and it ſped accordingly. He diſtruſted God, and his power to protect him, and bear him out; he was too much under the power of that *fear of man*, which *brings a ſnare.* It looked as if he durſt not ſtand to what he had ſaid, or was aſhamed of his maſter. It was eſpecially unbecoming him to flee *into Egypt*, and ſo in effect to abandon the land of Iſrael, and to throw himſelf quite out of the way of being uſeful. Note, There are many that have much grace, that have little courage; that are very honeſt, but withal very timorous. (4.) His execution notwithſtanding. Jehoiakim's malice, one would have thought, might have contented itſelf with his baniſhment, and it might ſuffice to have driven him the country; but they are *blood-thirſty* that *hate the upright*, Prov. xxix. 10. it was the life, that precious life, that he hunted after, and nothing leſs would ſatisfy him. So implacable is his revenge, that he ſends a party of ſoldiers into Egypt, ſome hundreds of miles, and they bring him back by force of arms. It would not ſufficiently gratify him to have him ſlain in Egypt, but he muſt feed his eyes with the bloody ſpectacle; they *brought him to Jehoiakim*, and he *ſlew him with the ſword*, for ought I know with his own hands. Yet neither did this ſatisfy his inſatiable malice, but he loads the dead body of the good man with infamy, would not allow it the decent reſpects uſually and juſtly paid to the remains of men of diſtinction, but caſt it into *the graves of the common people*, as if he had not been a prophet of the Lord; thus was the *ſhield of Saul vilely caſt away, as though he had not been anointed with oil.* Thus Jehoiakim hoped to ruin his reputation with the people, that no heed might be given to his predictions, and to deter others from propheſying in like manner, but in vain; Jeremiah ſaith the ſame. There is no contending with the word of God. Herod thought he had gained his point when he had cut off John baptiſt's head, but found himſelf deceived, when ſoon after he heard of Jeſus Chriſt, and ſaid in a fright, *This is John the baptiſt.*

(4.) Here is Jeremiah's deliverance. Though Urijah was lately put to death, and perſecutors, when they have taſted the blood of ſaints, are apt to thirſt after more, as Herod, *Acts* xii. 2, 3. yet God wonderfully preſerved Jeremiah, though he did not flee as Urijah did, but ſtood his ground. Ordinary miniſters may uſe ordinary means, provided they be lawful ones, for their own preſervation; but they that had an extraordinary miſſion, might expect an extraordinary protection. God raiſed up a friend for Jeremiah, whoſe hand was with him; he took him by the hand in a friendly way, encouraged him, aſſiſted him, appeared for him. It was *Ahikam the ſon of Shaphan*, one that was a miniſter of ſtate in Joſiah's time; we read of him, 2 *Kings* xxii. 12. Some think Gedaliah was the ſon of this Ahikam. He had a great intereſt, it ſhould ſeem, among the princes, and he uſed it in favour of Jeremiah, to prevent the further deſigns of the prieſts and prophets againſt him, who would have had him turned over *into the hand of the people*; not thoſe people, *ver.* 16. that had adjudged him innocent, but the rude and inſolent mob, whom they could perſuade by their curſed inſinuations not only to cry, *crucify him, crucify him*, but to *ſtone him to death* in a popular tumult; for perhaps Jehoiakim had been ſo reproached by his own conſcience for ſlaying Urijah, that they deſpaired of making him the tool of their malice. Note, God can, when he pleaſeth, raiſe up great men to patronize good men; and it is an encouragement to us to truſt him in the way of duty, that he hath all mens hearts in his hands.

CHAP. XXVII.

Jeremiah the prophet, ſince he cannot perſuade people to ſubmit to God's precept, and ſo to prevent the deſtruction of their country by the king of Babylon, is here perſuading them to ſubmit to God's providence, by yielding tamely to the king of Babylon, and becoming tributaries to him, which was the wiſeſt courſe they could now take, and would be a mitigation of the calamity, and prevent the laying of their country waſte by fire and ſword; the ſacrificing of their liberties would be the ſaving of their lives. (1.) He gives this counſel in God's name to the kings of the neighbour-nations, that they might make the beſt of bad, aſſuring them, that there was no remedy, but they muſt ſerve the king of Babylon; and yet in time there ſhould be relief, for his dominion ſhould laſt but 70 years, ver. 1,—11. *(2.) He gives this counſel to Zedekiah king of Judah particularly,* ver. 12,—14. *and to the prieſts and people, aſſuring them, that the king of Babylon ſhould ſtill proceed againſt them, till things were brought to the laſt extremity, and a patient ſubmiſſion would be the only way to mitigate the calamity, and make it eaſy,* ver. 12,—22. *Thus the prophet, if they would but have hearkened to him, would have directed them in the paths of true policy, as well as of true piety.*

1. IN the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the ſon of Joſiah king of Judah, came this word unto Jeremiah from the LORD, ſaying, 2. Thus ſaith the LORD to me, Make thee bonds and yokes, and put them upon thy neck, 3. And ſend them to the king of Edom, and to the king of Moab, and to the king of the Ammonites, and to the king of Tyrus, and to the king of Zidon, by the hand of the meſſengers which come to Jeruſalem unto Zedekiah king of Judah; 4. And command them to ſay unto their maſters, Thus ſaith the LORD of hoſts, the God of Iſrael, thus ſhall ye ſay unto your maſters, 5. I have made the earth, the man and the beaſt that *are* upon the ground, by my great power, and by my outſtretched arm, and have given it unto whom it ſeemed meet unto me. 6. And now have I given all theſe lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon my ſervant, and the beaſts of the field have I given him alſo to ſerve him. 7. And all nations ſhall ſerve him and his ſon, and his ſons ſon, until the very time of his land come; and *then* many nations and great kings ſhall ſerve themſelves of him. 8. And it ſhall come to paſs, *that* the nation and kingdom which will not ſerve the ſame Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, and that will not put their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, that nation will I puniſh, ſaith the LORD, with the ſword, and with the famine, and with the peſtilence, until I have conſumed them by his hand. 9. Therefore hearken not ye to your prophets, nor to your diviners, nor to your dreamers, nor to your enchanters, nor to your ſorcerers, which ſpeak unto you, ſaying, Ye ſhall not ſerve the king of Babylon: 10. For they propheſy a lie unto you, to remove you far from your land, and that I ſhould drive you out, and ye ſhould periſh. 11. But the nations that bring their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and ſerve him, thoſe will I let remain ſtill in their own land, ſaith the LORD, and they ſhall till it, and dwell therein.

Some difficulty occurs in the date of this prophecy. This word is ſaid to come to Jeremiah, in *the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim*, ver. 1. and yet the meſſengers, to whom he is to deliver the badges of ſervitude, are ſaid, *ver.* 3. to come to *Zedekiah king of Judah*, who reigned not till eleven years after the beginning of Jehoiakim's reign. Some make it an error of the copy, and that it ſhould be read, *ver.* 1. *In the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah*, for which ſome negligent ſcribe, having his eye on the title of the foregoing chapter, wrote Jehoiakim. And if one would admit a miſtake any where it ſhould be here, for Zedekiah is mentioned again, *ver.* 12. and the next prophecy is dated the ſame year, and ſaid to be in the *beginning of the reign of Zedekiah*, chap. xxviii. 1. Dr. Lightfoot ſolves it thus, In the beginning of Jehoiakim's reign, Jeremiah is to make theſe bonds and yokes, and to put them upon his own neck, in token of Judah's ſubjection to the king of Babylon, which began at that time, but he is to ſend them to the neighbouring kings afterwards in the reign of Zedekiah, of whoſe ſucceſſion to Jehoiakim, and the ambaſſadors ſent to him, mention is made by way of prediction.

1. Jeremiah is to prepare a ſign of the general reduction of all theſe countries into ſubjection to the king of Babylon, *ver.* 2. *Make thee bonds and yokes*, yokes with bonds to faſten them, that the beaſt may not ſlip his neck out of the yoke. Into theſe the prophet muſt put his own neck, to make them taken notice of as a prophetical repreſentation; for every one would enquire, what was the meaning of Jeremiah's yokes? We find him with one on, *chap.* xxviii. 10. Hereby he intimated, that he adviſed them to nothing but what he was reſolved to do himſelf; for he was none of thoſe that *bind heavy burdens* on others, which they themſelves will not *touch with one of their fingers.* Miniſters muſt thus lay themſelves under the weight and obligation of what they preach to others.

2. He is to ſend this, with a ſermon annexed to it, to all the neighbouring princes; thoſe are mentioned, *ver.* 3. that lay next to the land of Canaan. It ſhould ſeem there was a treaty of alliance on foot between the king of Judah and all thoſe other kings; Jeruſalem was the place appointed for the treaty; thither they all ſend their plenipotentiaries; and it was agreed, that they ſhould bind themſelves in a league offenſive and defenſive, to ſtand by one another, in oppoſition to the growing threatning greatneſs of the king of Babylon, and to reduce his exorbitant power. A mighty confidence they had in their ſtrength thus united, and were ready to call themſelves the High Allies: But when the envoys were returning to their reſpective maſters, with the ratification of this treaty, Jeremiah gives each of them a yoke to carry to his maſter, to ſignify to him, that he muſt either by conſent or by compulſion

pulsion become a servant to the king of Babylon, let him choose which he will. In the sermon upon this sign,

1. God asserts his own indisputable right to dispose of kingdoms as he pleaseth, *ver.* 5. He is the creator of all things; he *made the earth* at first, established it, and it abideth: It is still the same, though *one generation passeth away, and another comes*; he still by a continued creation produceth *man and beast upon the ground*; and it is by his *great power* and *out-stretched arm*. His arm has an infinite strength, though it be *shretched out*. Upon this account he may give and convey a property and dominion to whomsoever he pleaseth. As he hath graciously *given the earth to the children of men* in general, *Psal.* cxv. 16. so he gives to each their share of it, be it more or less. Note, Whatever any have of the good things of this world, it is what God sees fit to give them; we ourselves should therefore be content, though we have never so little, and not envy any their share, though they have never so much.

2. He publisheth a grant of all these countries to Nebuchadnezzar. Know all men by these presents, *Sciant præsentes & futuri*, This is to certify all whom it may concern, that I have *given all these lands*, with all the wealth of them, into *the hands of the king of Babylon*, even the *beasts of the field*, whether tame or wild, *have I given to him*, parks and pastures, they are all his own. Nebuchadnezzar was a proud wicked man, an idolater, and yet God in his providence gives him this large dominion, these vast possessions. Note, The things of this world are not the best things, for God often gives the largest share of them to bad men, that are rivals with him, and rebels against him. He was a wicked man, and yet what he had he had by divine grant. Note, Dominion is not founded in grace. Those that have not any colourable title to eternal happiness, may yet have a justifiable title to their temporal good things. Nebuchadnezzar is a very ill man, and yet God calls him his servant, because he employed him as an instrument of his providence for the chastising of the nations, and particularly his own people; and for his service therein, he thus liberally repaid him. Those whom God makes use of, shall not lose by him; much more will he be found the bountiful rewarder of all those that designedly and sincerely serve him.

3. He assures them, that they should all be unavoidably brought under the dominion of the king of Babylon for a time, *ver.* 7. *All Nations*, all these nations, and many others, shall serve *him and his son, and his son's son:* His son was Evil-merodach, and his son's son Belshazzar, in whom his kingdom ceased: then the time of reckoning with his land came, when the tables shall be turned, and *many nations and great kings* incorporated in the empire of the Medes and Persians, shall *serve themselves of him*, as before, *chap.* xxv. 14. Thus Adonibezek was trampled upon himself, as he had trampled on other kings.

4. He threatens those with military execution that stood out and would not submit to the king of Babylon, *ver.* 8. That nation that will not *put their neck under his yoke*, I will *punish with sword and famine*, with one judgment after another, till it is *consumed by his hand*. Nebuchadnezzar was very unjust and barbarous in invading the rights and liberties of his neighbours thus, and forcing them into a subjection to him, yet God had just and holy ends in permitting it, to punish these nations for their idolatry and gross immoralities. They that would not serve the God that made them, were justly made to serve their enemies that sought to ruin them.

5. He shews them the vanity of all the hopes they fed themselves with, that they should preserve their liberties, *ver.* 9, 10. These nations had their prophets too, that pretended to foretel future events by the stars, or by dreams, or enchantments; and they, to please their patrons, and because they would themselves have it so, flattered them with assurances, that they *should not serve the king of Babylon*. Thus they designed to animate them to a vigorous resistance; and though they had no ground for it, they hoped hereby to do them service: But he tells them it would prove to their destruction; for by resisting they would provoke the conqueror to deal severely with them, to *remove them*, and *drive them out* into a miserable captivity, in which they should all be lost, and buried in oblivion. Particular prophecies against these nations that bordered on Israel severally, the ruin of which is here foretold in the general, we shall meet with, *Jer.* xlviii. and xlix. and *Ezek.* xxv. which had the same accomplishment with this here. Note, when God judgeth, he will overcome.

6. He puts them in a fair way to prevent their destruction, by a quiet and easy submission, *ver.* 11. The nations that will be content to *serve the king of Babylon*, and pay him tribute for 70 years (ten apprenticeships) *those will I let remain still in their own land:* They that will bend, shall not break. Perhaps the dominion of the king of Babylon may bear no harder upon them than that of their own kings had done. It is many times more a point of honour than true wisdom, to prefer liberty before life. It is not mentioned to the disgrace of Issachar, that because he saw *rest* was *good*, and the *land pleasant*, that he might peaceably enjoy it, he bowed *his shoulder to bear*, and *became a servant to tribute*, Gen. xlix. 14, 15. as these here are advised to do, *serve the king of Babylon*, and you shall *till the land*, and *dwell therein*. Some would condemn this as the evidence of a mean spirit, but the prophet recommends it as that of a meek spirit, that yields to necessity, and by a quiet submission to the hardest turns of providence makes the best of bad: it is better to do so, than by struggling make it worse.

Levius fit patientia quicquid corrigere est nefas.

Many might have prevented destroying providences, by humbling themselves under humbling providences. It is better to take up a lighter cross in our way, than pull a heavier on our own head.

12. ¶ I spake also to Zedekiah king of Judah, according to all these words, saying, Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him and his people, and live. 13. Why will ye die, thou and thy people, by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence, as the LORD hath spoken against the nation that will not serve the king of Babylon? 14. Therefore hearken not unto the words of the prophets that speak unto you, saying, Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon: for they prophesy a lie unto you. 15. For I have not sent them, saith the LORD, yet they prophesy a lie in my name, that I might drive you out, and that ye might perish, ye, and the prophets that prophesy unto you. 16. Also I spake to the priests, and to all this people, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Hearken not to the words of your prophets, that prophesy unto you, saying, Behold, the vessels of the LORDs house shall now shortly be brought again from Babylon; for they prophesy a lie unto you. 17. Hearken not unto them, serve the king of Babylon and live: wherefore should this city be laid waste? 18. But if they *be* prophets, and if the word of the LORD be with them, let them now make intercession to the LORD of hosts, that the vessels *which are* left in the house of the LORD, and *in* the house of the king of Judah, and at Jerusalem, go not to Babylon. 19. ¶ For thus saith the LORD of hosts, concerning the pillars, and concerning the sea, and concerning the bases, and concerning the residue of the vessels that remain in this city, 20. Which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took not, when he carried away captive Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, from Jerusalem to Babylon, and all the nobles of Judah and Jerusalem: 21. Yea, thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, concerning the vessels that remain in the house of the LORD, and in the house of the king of Judah, and of Jerusalem, 22. They shall be carried to Babylon, and there shall they be until the day that I visit them, saith the LORD: then will I bring them up, and restore them to this place.

What was said to all the nations, is here with a particular tenderness applied to the nation of the Jews, for whom Jeremiah was sensibly concerned. The case at present stood thus: Judah and Jerusalem had often contested with the king of Babylon, and still were worsted; many both of their valuable persons and their valuable goods, were carried to Babylon already, and some of the *vessels of the Lord's house* particularly. Now how this struggle would issue, was the question. They had those among them at Jerusalem, who pretended to be prophets, that bid them hold out, and they should, in a little time, be too hard for the king of Babylon, and recover all that they had lost: Now Jeremiah is sent to bid them yield, and knock under, for, instead of recovering what they had lost, they should otherwise lose all that remained, and to press them to this is the scope of these verses.

1. Jeremiah humbly addresseth the king of Judah, to perswade him to surrender to the king of Babylon: his act would be the peoples, and would determine them, and therefore he speaks to him as to them all, *ver.* 12. *Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and live.* Is it their wisdom to submit to the heavy iron yoke of a cruel tyrant, that they may secure the lives of their bodies? And is it not much more our wisdom to submit to the sweet and easy yoke of our rightful Lord and Master Jesus Christ, that we may secure the lives of our souls? Bring down your spirits to repentance and faith, and that is the way to bring up your spirits to heaven and glory. And with much more cogency and compassion may we expostulate with perishing souls, than Jeremiah here expostulates with a perishing people, *Why will ye die by the sword and the famine?* Miserable deaths, which you inevitably run yourselves upon, under pretence of avoiding miserable lives. What God had spoken in general, of all those that would not submit to the king of Babylon, he would have them to apply to themselves, and be afraid of. It were well if sinners would, in like manner, be afraid of the destruction threatned against all those that will not have *Christ to reign over them*, and reason thus with themselves, *Why should we die* the second death, which

which is a thouſand times worſe than that by *ſword and famine*, when we might ſubmit and live.

2. He addreſſeth himſelf likewiſe to the prieſts and the people, *ver.* 16. to perſwade them to *ſerve the king of Babylon*, that they might *live*, and might prevent the deſolation of the city, *ver.* 17. *Wherefore ſhould it be laid waſte?* as certainly it will be, if you ſtand it out. The prieſts had been Jeremiah's enemies, and had ſought his life to deſtroy it, yet he approves himſelf their friend, and ſeeks their lives to preſerve and ſecure them; which is an example to us to render *good for evil*: When the *blood-thirſty hate the upright*, yet *the juſt ſeek his ſoul*, and the welfare of it, *Prov.* xxix. 10. The matter was far gone here, they were upon the brink of ruin, which they had not been brought to, if they would have taken Jeremiah's counſel, yet he continues his friendly admonitions to them, to ſave the laſt ſtake, and manage that wiſely, and now at length in this their day to underſtand the *things that belong to their peace*, when they had but one day to turn them in.

3. In both theſe addreſſes he warns them againſt giving credit to the falſe prophets, that rocked them aſleep in their ſecurity, becauſe they ſaw they loved to ſlumber: *Hearken not to the words of the prophets*, ver. 14. *your prophets*, ver. 16. They are not God's prophets, he never ſent them, they do not ſerve him, nor ſeek to pleaſe him; they are yours, for they ſay what you would have them ſay, and aim at nothing but to pleaſe you.

Two things their prophets flattered them into the belief of.

1. That the power which the king of Babylon had gained over them ſhould now ſhortly be broken: They ſaid, *ver.* 14. *Ye ſhall not ſerve the king of Babylon*; you need not ſubmit voluntarily, for you ſhall not be compelled to ſubmit. This they propheſied *in the name of the Lord*, ver. 15. as if God had ſent them to the people on this errand, in kindneſs to them, that they might not diſparage themſelves by an inglorious ſurrender. But it was a lie; they ſaid God ſent them, but that was falſe, he diſowns it, *I have not ſent them, ſaith the Lord*: they ſaid they ſhould never be brought into ſubjection to the king of Babylon, but that was falſe too, the event proved it ſo: they ſaid, to hold out to the laſt would be the way to ſecure themſelves and their city; but that was falſe, for it would certainly end in their being driven out, and periſhing. So that it was all a lie from firſt to laſt; and the prophets that deceived the people with theſe lies, did, in the iſſue, but deceive themſelves, the blind leaders and the blind followers fell together into the ditch, that *ye might periſh, ye, and the prophets that prophecy unto you*; who will be ſo far from warranting your ſecurity, that they cannot ſecure themſelves. Note, They that encourage ſinners to go on in their ſinful ways, will, in the end, periſh with them.

2. They propheſied that the veſſels of the temple, which the king of Babylon had already carried away, ſhould now ſhortly be brought back, *ver.* 16. this they fed the prieſts with the hopes of, knowing how acceptable it would be to them, who loved the *gold of the temple* better than the *temple that ſanctified the gold*. Theſe veſſels were taken away when Jeconiah was carried captive into Babylon, *ver.* 20. We have the ſtory, and it is a melancholy one, 2 *Kings* xxiv. 13, 14, 15. 2 *Chron.* xxxvi. 10. All the *goodly veſſels*, that is, all the *veſſels of gold* that were *in the houſe of the Lord*, with all the treaſures, were taken as prey and brought to Babylon. This was grievous to them above any thing, for the temple was their pride and confidence, and the ſtripping of that was too plain an indication of that which the true prophet told them, that their *God was departed from them*. Their falſe prophets therefore had no other way to make them eaſy, but by telling them that the king of Babylon ſhould be forced to reſtore them in a little while. Now here,

(1.) Jeremiah bids them think of preſerving the veſſels that remained, by their prayers, rather than of bringing back thoſe that were gone by their prophecies, *ver.* 18. *If they be prophets*, as they pretend, and if *the word of the Lord be with them*; if they have any intercourſe with heaven, and any intereſt there, let them improve it for the ſtopping of the progreſs of the judgment, let them ſtep into the gap, and ſtand with their cenſer *between the living and the dead*, between that which is carried away and that which remains, that *the plague may be ſtayed: Let them make interceſſion with the Lord of hoſts*, that the veſſels that are left go not after the reſt. (1.) Inſtead of *propheſying* let them *pray*. Note, prophets muſt be praying men; by being much in prayer they muſt make it to appear, that they keep up a correſpondence with heaven. We cannot think that thoſe do, as prophets, ever hear thence, who do not frequently by prayer ſend thither. By praying for the ſafety and proſperity of the ſanctuary, they muſt make it to appear, that, as becomes prophets, they are of a publick ſpirit; and by the ſucceſs of their prayers it will appear that God favours them. (2.) Inſtead of being concerned for the retrieving of what they had loſt, they muſt beſtir themſelves for the ſecuring of what was left, and take it as a great favour if they can gain that point. When God's judgments are abroad, we muſt not ſeek great things, but be thankful for a little.

2. He aſſures them that even this point ſhould not be gained, but the brazen veſſels ſhould go after the golden ones, *ver.* 19,—22. Nebuchadnezzar had found ſo good a booty once, that he would be ſure to come again and take all he could find, not only in *the houſe of the Lord*, but in the *king's houſe*. They ſhall all be carried to Babylon in triumph, and *there ſhall they be*. But he concludes with a gracious promiſe, that the time ſhould come, when they ſhould all be returned; *until the day that I viſit them in mercy*, according to appointment, and *then I will bring* thoſe veſſels *up again, and reſtore them to this place*, to their place. Surely they were under the protection of a ſpecial providence, elſe they had been melted down and put to ſome other uſe; but there was to be a ſecond temple, for which they were to be reſerved. We read particularly of the return of them, *Ezra* i. 8. Note, Though the return of the church's proſperity do not come in our time, we muſt not therefore deſpair of it, for it will come in God's time. Though they that ſaid *the veſſels of the Lord's houſe* ſhall *ſhortly* be brought again propheſied a lie, *ver.* 16. yet he that ſaid they ſhall *at length* be brought again, propheſied the truth. We are apt to ſet our clock before God's dial, and then to quarrel becauſe they do not agree; but the Lord is a God of judgment, and it is fit we ſhould wait for him.

CHAP. XXVIII.

In the foregoing chapter Jeremiah had charged thoſe prophets with lies, who foretold the ſpeedy breaking of the yoke of the king of Babylon, and the ſpeedy return of the veſſels of the ſanctuary; now here we have his conteſt with a particular prophet upon thoſe heads, (1.) Hananiah a pretender to prophecy, in contradiction to Jeremiah, foretold the ſinking of Nebuchadnezzar's power, and the return both of the perſons and of the veſſels that were carried away, ver. 1, — 4. *and as a ſign of this he broke the yoke from the neck of Jeremiah,* ver. 10, 11. *(2.) Jeremiah wiſhed his words might prove true, but appealed to the event whether they were ſo or no, not doubting but that would diſprove them,* ver. 5,-9. *(3.) The doom both of the deceived and the deceiver is here read. The people that were deceived ſhould have their yoke of wood turned into a yoke of iron,* ver. 12, —14. *and the prophet that was the deceiver ſhould be ſhortly cut off by death, and he was ſo accordingly within two months,* ver. 15, — 17.

1. AND it came to paſs the ſame year, in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the fourth year, *and* in the fifth month, *that* Hananiah the ſon of Azur the prophet, which *was* of Gibeon, ſpake unto me in the houſe of the LORD, in the preſence of the prieſts, and of all the people, ſaying, 2. Thus ſpeaketh the LORD of hoſts, the God of Iſrael, ſaying, I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. 3. Within two full years will I bring again into this place all the veſſels of the LORDs houſe, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took away from this place, and carried them to Babylon. 4. And I will bring again to this place, Jeconiah the ſon of Jehoiakim king of Judah, with all the captives of Judah, that went into Babylon, ſaith the LORD; for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon. 5. ℸ Then the prophet Jeremiah ſaid unto the prophet Hananiah in the preſence of the prieſts, and in the preſence of all the people that ſtood in the houſe of the LORD, 6. Even the prophet Jeremiah ſaid, Amen: the LORD do ſo, the LORD perform thy words which thou haſt propheſied, to bring again the veſſels of the LORDs houſe, and all that is carried away captive, from Babylon into this place. 7. Nevertheleſs, hear thou now this word that I ſpake in thine ears, and in the ears of all the people, 8. The prophets that have been before me, and before thee of old, propheſied both againſt many countries, and againſt great kingdoms, of war, and of evil, and of peſtilence. 9. The prophet which propheſied of peace, when the word of the prophet ſhall come to paſs, *then* ſhall the prophet be known, that the LORD hath truly ſent him.

This ſtruggle between a true prophet and a falſe one, is ſaid here to have happened *in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah*, and yet *in the fourth year*, for the four firſt years of his reign might well be called *the beginning*, or former part of it, becauſe during thoſe years he reigned under the dominion of the king of Babylon, and as a tributary to him; whereas the reſt of his reign, which might well be called the *latter part* of it, in diſtinction from that *former part* he reigned in rebellion againſt the king of Babylon. In this fourth year of his reign he went in perſon to Babylon, as we find, *Jer.* li. 59. and it is probable, that gave the people ſome hope that his negotiation in perſon would put a good end to the war, in which hope the falſe prophets encouraged them; this Hananiah particularly, who was of Gibeon, a prieſts city, and therefore, probably, himſelf a prieſt, as well as Jeremiah. Now here we have,

1. The

1. The prediction which Hananiah delivered publickly, ſolemnly, *in the houſe of the Lord*, and in the name of the Lord, in an auguſt aſſembly, *in the preſence of the prieſts, and of all the people*, who probably were expecting to have ſome meſſage from heaven: in delivering this prophecy he faced Jeremiah, he ſpoke it to him, *ver.* 1. deſigning to confront and contradict him, as much as to ſay, Jeremiah, thou lieſt. Now his prediction is, that the king of Babylon's power, at leaſt his power over Judah and Jeruſalem ſhould be ſpeedily broken; that *within two full years* the veſſels of the temple ſhould be brought back, and Jeremiah and all the captives that were carried away with him ſhould return, whereas Jeremiah had foretold, that the yoke of the king of Babylon ſhould be bound on yet faſter, and that the veſſels and captives ſhould not return of 70 years, *ver.* 2, 3, 4. Now upon the reading of this ſham prophecy, and comparing it with the meſſages that God ſent by the true prophets, we may obſerve what a vaſt difference there is between them. Here is nothing of that ſpirit and life, that majeſty of ſtile, and ſublimeneſs of expreſſion, that appears in the diſcourſes of God's prophets, nothing of that divine flame and *flatus*. But that which is eſpecially wanting here is an air of piety; he ſpeaks with a great deal of confidence of the return of their proſperity, but here is not a word of good counſel given them to repent and reform, and return to God, to pray and ſeek his face, that they might be prepared for thoſe favours God had in reſerve for them. He promiſeth them temporal mercies in God's name, but makes no mention of thoſe ſpiritual mercies which God always promiſed ſhould go along with them, as *chap.* xxiv. 7. *I will give them a heart to know me.* By all which it appears, that whatever he pretended, he had only the *ſpirit of the world*, not the *Spirit of God*, 1 Cor. ii. 12. that he aimed to pleaſe, not to profit.

2. Jeremiah's reply to this pretended prophecy.

1. He heartily wiſheth it might prove true; ſuch an affection has he for his country, and ſo truly deſirous is he of the welfare of it, that he would be content to lie under the imputation of a falſe prophet, ſo that their ruin might be prevented. He ſaid *Amen, the Lord do ſo, the Lord perform thy words*, ver. 5, 6. This was not the firſt time that Jeremiah had prayed for his people, though he had propheſied againſt them, and deprecated the judgments, which yet he certainly knew would come; as Chriſt prayed, *Father, if it be poſſible, let this cup paſs from me*, when yet he knew it muſt not paſs from him. Though, as a faithful prophet, he foreſaw and foretold the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, yet as a faithful Iſraelite, he prayed earneſtly for the preſervation of it, in obedience to that command, *Pray for the peace of Jeruſalem.* Though the will of God's purpoſe is the rule of prophecy and patience, the will of his precept is the rule of prayer and practice. God himſelf, though he has determined, yet he doth not deſire the death of ſinners, but would *have all men to be ſaved.* Jeremiah often interceded for his people, *chap.* xviii. 20. The falſe prophets thought to ingratiate themſelves with the people, by promiſing them peace; now the prophet ſhews, that he bore them as great a good-will as their prophets did that they were ſo fond of; and though he had no warrant from God to promiſe them peace, yet he earneſtly deſired it, and prayed for it. How ſtrangely were they beſotted, who careſſed thoſe who did them the greateſt wrong imaginable, by flattering them; and perſecuted him who did them the greateſt ſervice imaginable, by interceding for them! See *chap.* xxvii. 18.

2. He appeals to the event to prove it falſe, *ver.* 7, 8, 9. The falſe prophets reflected upon Jeremiah, as Ahab upon Micajah, becauſe he never *propheſied good concerning them, but evil*; now he pleads, that this had been the purport of the prophecies that other prophets had delivered, ſo that it ought not to be looked upon as a ſtrange thing, or as rendring his miſſion doubtful, for prophets of old propheſied againſt *many countries and great kingdoms*, ſo bold were they in delivering the meſſages which God ſent by them, and ſo far from fearing men, or ſeeking to pleaſe them, as Hananiah did; they made no difficulty, no more than Jeremiah did, of threatning war, famine and peſtilence, and what they ſaid was regarded as coming from God, why then ſhould Jeremiah be run down as *a peſtilent fellow, and a ſower of ſedition*, who preached no otherwiſe than God's prophets had always done before him? Other prophets had foretold deſtruction, and ſometimes the deſtruction did not come, which yet did not diſprove their divine miſſion, as in the caſe of Jonah, for God is gracious, and ready to turn away his wrath from thoſe that turn away from their ſins; but the prophet that *propheſied of peace* and proſperity, eſpecially as Hananiah did, abſolutely and unconditionally, without adding that neceſſary proviſo, that they do not by wilful ſin put a bar in their own door, and ſtop the current of God's favours, will be proved a true prophet only by the accompliſhment of his prediction; if it come to paſs, then it ſhall be known that *the Lord hath ſent him*, but if not, he will appear to be a cheat and an impoſtor.

10. ¶ Then Hananiah the prophet took the yoke from off the prophet Jeremiahs neck, and brake it. 11. And Hananiah ſpake in the preſence of all the people, ſaying, Thus ſaith the LORD, Even ſo will I break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon from the neck of all nations within the ſpace of two full years. And the prophet Jeremiah went his way. 12. ¶ Then the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah *the prophet* (after that Hananiah the prophet had broken the yoke from off the neck of the prophet Jeremiah) ſaying, 13. Go, and tell Hananiah, ſaying, Thus ſaith the LORD, Thou haſt broken the yokes of wood, but thou ſhalt make for them yokes of iron. 14. For thus ſaith the LORD of hoſts, the God of Iſrael, I have put a yoke of iron upon the neck of all theſe nations, that they may ſerve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and they ſhall ſerve him; and I have given him the beaſts of the field alſo. 15. ¶ Then ſaid the prophet Jeremiah unto Hananiah the prophet, Hear now, Hananiah, The LORD hath not ſent thee, but thou makeſt this people to truſt in a lie. 16. Therefore thus ſaith the LORD, Behold, I will caſt thee from off the face of the earth: this year ſhalt thou die, becauſe thou haſt taught rebellion againſt the LORD. 17. So Hananiah the prophet died the ſame year, in the ſeventh month.

We have here an inſtance,

1. Of the inſolence of the falſe prophet. To compleat the affront he deſigned Jeremiah, *he took the yoke from off his neck*, which he carried as a memorial of what he had propheſied concerning the enſlaving the nations to Nebuchadnezzar, and he broke it, that he might give a ſign of the accompliſhment of his prophecy, as Jeremiah had given of his, and might ſeem to have conquered him, and to have defeated the intention of his prophecy: ſee how the lying ſpirit in the mouth of this falſe prophet mimicks the language of the Spirit of truth, *Thus ſaith the Lord, ſo will I break the yoke of the king of Babylon*, not only from the neck of this nation, but *from the neck of all nations, within two full years.* Whether by the force of a heated imagination, Hananiah had perſwaded himſelf to believe this, or whether he knew it to be falſe, and only perſwaded them to believe it, doth not appear; but it is plain he ſpeaks with abundance of aſſurance. It is no new thing for lies to be fathered upon the God of truth.

2. Of the patience of the true prophet. Jeremiah quietly *went his way*, and when he was *reviled, he reviled not again*, and would not contend with one that was in the height of his fury, and in the midſt of the prieſts and people that were violently ſet againſt him. The reaſon why he went his way, was not becauſe he had nothing to anſwer, but becauſe he was willing to ſtay till God was pleaſed to furniſh him with a direct and immediate anſwer, which as yet he had not received. He expected God would ſend a ſpecial meſſage to Hananiah, and he would ſay nothing till he had received that: *I as a deaf man heard not, for thou wilt hear:* and *thou ſhalt anſwer, Lord, for me.* It may ſometimes be our wiſdom, rather to retreat than to contend. *Currenti cede furori.*

3. Of the juſtice of God in giving judgment between Jeremiah and his adverſary. Jeremiah went his way, as a man *in whoſe mouth there was no rebuke*, but God ſoon put a word into his mouth, for he will appear for thoſe who ſilently commit their cauſe to him.

(1.) The word of God in the mouth of Jeremiah is ratified and confirmed. Let not Jeremiah himſelf diſtruſt the truth of what he had delivered in God's name, becauſe it met with ſuch a daring oppoſition and contradiction. If what we have ſpoken be the truth of God, we muſt not unſay it becauſe men gainſay it; for *great is the truth, and will prevail.* It will ſtand, therefore let us ſtand to it, and not fear that mens unbelief or blaſphemy will make it of no effect. Hananiah hath broken the *yokes of wood*, but Jeremiah muſt make for them *yokes of iron* which cannot be broken, *ver.* 13. for (ſaith God) *I have put a yoke of iron upon the neck of all theſe nations*, which ſhall lie heavier and bind harder upon them, *ver.* 14. *that they may ſerve the king of Babylon*, and not be able to ſhake off the yoke however they may ſtruggle, for they ſhall ſerve him whether they will or no; and who is he that can contend with God's counſel? What was ſaid before is repeated again, *I have given him the beaſts of the field alſo*, as if there were ſomething ſignificant in that; men had, by their wickedneſs, made themſelves *like the beaſts that periſh*, and therefore deſerved to be ruled by an arbitrary power, as beaſts are ruled, and ſuch a power Nebuchadnezzar ruled with, for *whom he would he ſlew, and whom he would he kept alive.*

(2.) Hananiah is ſentenced to die for contradicting it, and Jeremiah, when he has received commiſſion from God, boldly tells him ſo to his face; though before he received that commiſſion he went away and ſaid nothing.

1. The crimes of which Hananiah ſtands convicted, are cheating the people and affronting God: *Thou makeſt this people to truſt in a lie*, encouraging them to hope they ſhall have peace, which will make their deſtruction the more terrible to them when it comes; yet this was not the worſt, *thou haſt taught rebellion againſt*

the Lord, i. e. thou haſt taught them to deſpiſe all the good counſel given them in God's name by the true prophets, and rendered t ineffectual. Thoſe have a great deal to anſwer for, who by telling ſinners they ſhall have peace, though they go on, harden their hearts in a contempt of the reproofs and admonitions of the word, and the means and methods God takes to bring them to repentance.

2. The judgment given againſt him is, *I will caſt thee off from the face of the earth*, as unworthy to live upon it, thou ſhalt be buried in it; *this year thou ſhalt die*, and die as a rebel againſt the Lord, to whom death would come with a ſting and a curſe. This ſentence was executed, *ver.* 17. Hananiah died the ſame year, within two months: for his prophecy is dated the fifth month, *ver.* 1. and his death the ſeventh. Good men may, perhaps, be ſuddenly taken off by death, in the midſt of their days, and in mercy to them, as Joſiah was; but this being foretold, as the puniſhment of his ſin, and coming to paſs accordingly, it may ſafely be conſtrued as a teſtimony from heaven againſt him, and a confirmation of Jeremiah's miſſion. And if the peoples hearts had not been wretchedly hardened by the deceitfulneſs of ſin, it would have prevented their being further hardened by the deceitfulneſs of their prophets.

CHAP. XXIX.

The conteſt between Jeremiah and the falſe prophets was carried on before by preaching, here by writing: there we had ſermon againſt ſermon, here we have letter againſt letter; for ſome of the falſe prophets are now carried away into captivity in Babylon, while Jeremiah remains in his own country. Now here is, 1. *A letter which Jeremiah wrote to the captives in Babylon, againſt their prophets that they had there,* ver. 1,—3. *in which letter* (1.) *He endeavours to reconcile them to their captivity, to be eaſy under it, and make the beſt of it,* ver. 4,—7. (2.) *He cautions them not to give any credit to their falſe prophets, that fed them with hopes of a ſpeedy releaſe,* ver. 8, 9. (3.) *He aſſures them that God would reſtore them in mercy to their own land again at the end of ſeventy years,* ver. 10,—14. (4.) *He foretels the deſtruction of thoſe who yet continued, and that they ſhould be perſecuted with one judgment after another, and ſent at laſt into captivity,* ver. 15.—19. (5.) *He propheſies the deſtruction of two of their falſe prophets that they had in Babylon, that both ſoothed them up in their ſins, and ſet them ill examples,* ver. 20,—23. *and this is the purport of Jeremiah's letter.* 2. *Here is a letter which Shemaiah a falſe prophet in Babylon wrote to the prieſts at Jeruſalem, to ſtir them up to perſecute Jeremiah,* ver. 24,—29. *and a denunciation of God's wrath againſt him for writing ſuch a letter,* ver. 30,—32. *Such ſtruggles as theſe have there always been between the ſeed of the woman and the ſeed of the ſerpent.*

1. NOW theſe *are* the words of the letter, that Jeremiah the prophet ſent from Jeruſalem unto the reſidue of the elders which were carried away captives, and to the prieſts, and to the prophets, and to all the people, whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive from Jeruſalem to Babylon, 2. (After that Jeconiah the king, and the queen, and the eunuchs, the princes of Judah and Jeruſalem, and the carpenters, and the ſmiths were departed from Jeruſalem) 3. By the hand of Elaſah the ſon of Shaphan, and Gemariah the ſon of Hilkiah, (whom Zedekiah king of Judah ſent unto Babylon to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon) ſaying, 4. Thus ſaith the LORD of hoſts the God of Iſrael unto all that are carried away captives, whom I have cauſed to be carried away from Jeruſalem unto Babylon, 5. Build ye houſes, and dwell *in them*, and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them. 6. Take ye wives, and beget ſons and daughters, and take wives for your ſons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear ſons and daughters, that ye may be increaſed there, and not diminiſhed. 7. And ſeek the peace of the city whither I have cauſed you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the LORD for it: for in the peace thereof ſhall ye have peace.

We are here told,

1. That Jeremiah did write to the captives in Babylon in the name of the Lord. Jeconiah had ſurrendred himſelf a priſoner, with the *queen* his mother, the chamberlains of his houſhold, called here the *eunuchs*, many of *the princes of Judah and Jeruſalem*, that were at that time the moſt active men, *the carpenters and ſmiths* likewiſe being demanded were yielded up, that thoſe which remain might not have any proper hands to fortify their city, or furniſh themſelves with weapons of war; by this tame ſubmiſſion it was hoped that Nebuchadnezzar would be pacified; *Satis eſt proſtraſſe leoni:* but the imperious conqueror grows upon their conceſſions, like Benhadad upon Ahab's, 1 *Kings* xx. 5, 6. And not content with this, when theſe were *departed from Jeruſalem*, he comes again and fetcheth away many more of *the elders, the prieſts, the prophets, and the people*, ver. 1. ſuch as he thought fit, or ſuch as his ſoldiers could lay hands on, and carries them to Babylon. The caſe of theſe captives was very melancholy, the rather becauſe they being thus diſtinguiſhed from the reſt of their brethren who continued in their own land, looked as if they were greater ſinners than all men that dwelt at Jeruſalem; Jeremiah therefore writes a letter to them to comfort them, aſſuring them that they had no reaſon either to deſpair of ſuccour themſelves, or to envy their brethren that were left behind. Note, 1. The word of God written, is as truly given by *inſpiration of God*, as his word ſpoken was; and this was the proper way of ſpreading the knowledge of God's will among his *children ſcattered abroad*. 2. We may ſerve God, and do good by writing, to our friends at a diſtance, pious letters of ſeaſonable comforts and wholſome counſels. Whom we cannot ſpeak to we may write to, that which is written remains. This letter of Jeremiah's was ſent to the captives in Babylon, by the hands of the embaſſadors whom Zedekiah ſent to Nebuchadnezzar, probably to pay him his tribute, and renew his ſubmiſſion to him, or to treat of peace with him, in which treaty the captives might, perhaps, hope that they ſhould be included, *ver.* 3. By ſuch meſſengers Jeremiah choſe to ſend this meſſage, to put an honour upon it, becauſe it was a meſſage from God. Or, perhaps, becauſe there was no ſettled way of ſending letters to Babylon, but as ſuch an occaſion as this offered. And then it made the condition of the captives there the more melancholy, that they could rarely hear from their friends and relations they had left behind, which is ſome reviving and ſatisfaction to thoſe that are ſeparated from one another.

2. We are here told what he wrote. A copy of a letter at large follows here to *ver.* 24. In theſe verſes,

1. He aſſures them that he wrote in the name of the *Lord of hoſts, the God of Iſrael*, who indited the letter, Jeremiah was but the ſcribe, or Amanuenſis. It would be comfortable to them in their captivity to hear that God is *the Lord of hoſts*, of all hoſts, and is therefore able to help and deliver them; and that he is the *God of Iſrael* ſtill, a God in covenant with his people, though he contend with them, and their enemies for the preſent are too hard for them; this would likewiſe be an admonition to them to ſtand upon their guard againſt all temptations to the idolatry of Babylon, becauſe the *God of Iſrael*, the God whom they ſerved is *Lord of hoſts*. God's ſending to them in this letter, might be an encouragement to them in their captivity, as it was an evidence that he had not caſt them off, had not abandoned them and diſinherited them, though he was diſpleaſed with them and corrected them; for if the Lord had been pleaſed to kill them, he would not have written to them.

2. God, by him, owns the hand he had in their captivity: *I have cauſed you to be carried away*, ver. 4. and again, *ver.* 7. All the force of the king of Babylon could not have done it, if God had not ordered it; nor could he have any power againſt them, but what was given him from above. If God cauſed them to be carried captives, they might be ſure he neither did them any wrong, nor meant them any hurt. Note, It will help very much to reconcile us to our troubles, and to make us patient under them, to conſider that they are what God has appointed us to, *I opened not my mouth, becauſe thou didſt it.*

3. He bids them think of no other but of ſettling there, and therefore let them reſolve to make the beſt of it, *ver.* 5, 6. *Build ye houſes, and dwell in them*, &c. By all this it is intimated to them, (1.) That they muſt not feed themſelves with hopes of a ſpeedy return out of their captivity, for that would keep them ſtill *unſettled*, and conſequently uneaſy, they would apply themſelves to no buſineſs, take no comfort, but be always tiring themſelves, and provoking their conquerors with the expectations of relief; and their diſappointment at laſt would ſink them into deſpair, and make their condition much more miſerable than otherwiſe it would be; let them therefore count upon a continuance there, and accommodate themſelves to it as well as they can. Let them *build*, and *plant*, and *marry*, and diſpoſe of their children there, as if they were at home in their own land; let them take a pleaſure in ſeeing their families built up and multiplied, for though they muſt expect themſelves to die in captivity, yet their children may live to ſee better days. If they live in the fear of God, what ſhould hinder them but they may live comfortably in Babylon? They cannot but *weep* ſometimes *when they remember Zion*, but let not weeping hinder ſowing, let them not *ſorrow as thoſe that have no hope*, no joy, for they have both. Note, In all conditions of life, it is our wiſdom and duty to make the beſt of that which is, and not to throw away the comfort of what we may have, becauſe we have not all we would have. We have a natural affection for our native country, it ſtrangely draws our minds, but it is with a *neſcio qua---dulcedine*, we can give no good account of it; and therefore if providence remove us to ſome other country, we muſt reſolve to live eaſy there, to bring our mind to our condition, when our condition is not in every thing to our mind; if the *earth be the Lord's*, then wherever a child of God goes, he doth not go off his Father's ground; *Patria eſt ubicunque bene eſt.* If

things

things be not as they have been, instead of fretting at that, we must live in hopes that they will be better than they are.

Non si male nunc, & olim sic erit.

(2.) That they must not disquiet themselves with fears of intolerable hardships in their captivity. They might be ready to suggest (as persons in trouble are always apt to make the worst of things) that it would be in vain to *build houses*, for their lords and masters would not suffer them to dwell in them when they had built them, nor to eat the fruit of their *vineyards* they planted; never fear, saith God, if you *live peaceably* with them, you shall find them civil to you. Meek and quiet people, that work and mind their own business, have often found much better treatment, even with strangers and enemies, than they expected; and God has made his people to be *pitied of those that carried them captives*, Psal. cvi. 46. and pity it is, but that those who have built houses should dwell in them. Nay,

4. He directs them to seek the good of the country where they were captives, *ver.* 7. to *pray* for it, to endeavour it; this forbids them to attempt any thing against the publick peace, while they were subjects to the king of Babylon, though he was a heathen, an idolater, an oppressor, and an enemy to God and his church, yet, while he gave them protection, they must pay him allegiance, and live *quiet and peaceable lives* under him, *in all godliness and honesty*; not plotting to shake off his yoke, but patiently leaving it to God in due time to work deliverance for them. Nay, they must pray to God for the peace of the place where they were, that they might oblige them to continue their kindness to them, and disprove the character that had been given their nation, that they were *hurtful to kings and provinces*, and *moved sedition*, Ezra iv. 15. Both the wisdom of the serpent, and the innocency of the dove, required them to be true to the government they lived under; for *in the peace thereof, ye shall have peace*; should the country be embroiled in war, they would have the greatest share in the calamitous effects of it. Thus the primitive christians, according to the temper of their holy religion, prayed for the powers that were, though they were persecuting powers. And if they were to pray for, and seek the peace of the land of their captivity, much more reason have we to pray for the welfare of the land of our nativity, where we are a free people under a good government, *that in the peace thereof* we and ours *may have peace*. Every passenger is concerned in the safety of the ship.

8. ¶ For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Let not your prophets and your diviners that *be* in the midst of you, deceive you, neither hearken to your dreams which ye cause to be dreamed. 9. For they prophesy falsly unto you in my name; I have not sent them, saith the LORD. 10. ¶ For thus saith the LORD, that after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon, I will visit you, and perform my good word towards you, in causing you to return to this place. 11. For I know the thoughts that I think towards you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. 12. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. 13. And ye shall seek me, and find *me*, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. 14. And I will be found of you, saith the LORD, and I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith the LORD, and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive.

To make the people quiet and easy in their captivity;

1. God takes them off from building upon the false bottom which their pretended prophets laid, *ver.* 8, 9. They told them their captivity should be short, and therefore they must not think of taking root in Babylon, but be upon the wing to go back: Now, herein *they deceive you* (saith God) they *prophesy a lye to you*, though they prophesy *in my name*. But *let them not deceive you*, suffer not yourselves to be deluded by them. As long as we have the word of truth to try the spirits by, it is our own fault if we be deceived; for by it we may be undeceived. *Hearken not to your dreams, which ye cause to be dreamed.* He means either the dreams or fancies which the people pleased themselves with, and with which they filled their own heads; by thinking and speaking of nothing else but a speedy enlargement when they were awake, they *caused* themselves to dream of it when they were asleep, and then took that for a good omen, and with it strengthened themselves in their vain expectations: Or the dreams which the prophets dreamed, and grounded their prophecies upon. God tells the people they are your dreams, because they pleased them, were the dreams that they desired and wished for, they *caused them to be dreamed*, for they hearkned to them, and encouraged the prophets to put such shams upon them, desiring them to prophesy nothing but *smooth things*, Isa. xxx. 10. They were dreams of their own bespeaking. False prophrets would not flatter people in their sins, but that they love to be flattered, and speak their prophets fair to speak them fair.

2. He gives them a good bottom to build their hopes upon. We would not persuade people to pull down the house they have built upon the sand, but that there is a rock ready for them to rebuild upon. God here promiseth them, that though they should not return quickly, they should return at length, *after seventy years be accomplished.* By this it appears, that the seventy years of the captivity are not to be reckoned from the last captivity, but the first. Note, Though the deliverance of the church do not come in our time, it is sufficient that it will come in God's time, and we are sure that is the best time. The promise is, that God will visit them in mercy; though he had long seemed to be strange to them, he will come among them, and appear for them, and put honour upon them, as great men do upon their inferiors by coming to visit them: He will put an end to *their captivity*, and *turn away* all the calamities of it. Though they are *dispersed*, some in one country, and some in another, he will *gather them from all the places whither they are driven*, will set up a standard for them all to resort to, and incorporate them again in one body. And though they are at a great distance, they shall be brought again to their own land, to *the place* whence they were *carried captive*, ver. 14.

Now, 1. This shall be the performance of God's promise to them, *ver.* 10. *I will perform my good word towards you.* Let not the failing of those predictions which are delivered as from God, lessen the reputation of those that really are from him. That which is indeed God's word is a *good word*, and therefore it will be made good, and not one iota or tittle of it shall fall to the ground. *Hath he said, and shall he not do it?* This will make their return out of captivity very comfortable, that it will be the performance of God's *good word* to them, the product of a gracious promise.

2. This shall be in pursuance of God's purposes concerning them, *ver.* 11. *I know the thoughts that I think towards you.* Known unto God are all his works, for known unto him are all his thoughts, *Acts* xv. 18. and his works agree exactly with his thoughts; he *doth all according to the counsel of his will.* We often do not know our own thoughts, not know our own mind, but God is never at any uncertainty within himself. We are sometimes ready to fear that God's designs concerning us are all against us: But he knows the contrary concerning his own people, that they are *thoughts of good and not of evil*; even that which seems evil is designed for good. His thoughts are all working towards the expected end, which he will give in due time. The end they expect will come, though perhaps not when they expect it. Let them have patience till the fruit is ripe, and then they shall have it. He will give them *an end, and expectation*; so it is in the original. (1.) He will give them to see *the end*, i. e. the comfortable period of their trouble, though it last long it shall not last always, the *time to favour Zion*, yea the *set time will come*; when things are at the worst they will begin to mend; and he will give them to see the glorious perfection of their deliverance; for as for God his work is perfect: He that in the beginning finished the *heavens and the earth*, and all the *hosts* of both, will finish all the blessings of both to his people. When he begins in ways of mercy, he will *make an end:* God doth nothing by halves. (2.) He will give them to see the *expectation*, that *end* which they desire and hope for, and have been long waiting for. He will give them not the expectations of their fears, or the expectations of their fancies, but the expectations of their faith; the *end* which he has promised, and which will turn for the best to them.

3. This shall be in answer to their prayers and supplications to God, *ver.* 12, 13, 14. (1.) God will stir them up to pray. *Then shall ye call upon me*, and *ye shall go and pray unto me.* Note, When God is about to give his people the expected good, he pours out a *spirit of prayer*, and it is a good sign he is coming towards them in mercy. Then when you see the *expected end* approaching, *then ye shall call upon me.* Note, Promises are given not to supersede, but to quicken and encourage prayer; and when deliverance is coming, we must by prayer go forth to meet it. When Daniel understood that the seventy years were near expiring, then he *set his face* with more fervency than ever to *Seek the Lord*, Dan. ix. 2, 3. (2.) He will then stir up himself to come and save them, *Psal.* lxxx. 2. *I will hearken unto you*, and *I will be found of you.* God hath said it, and we may depend upon it, *seek and ye shall find.* We have a general rule laid down, *ver.* 13. *Ye shall find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.* In seeking God we must search for him, accomplish a diligent search, search for directions in seeking him, and encouragements to our faith and hope: We must continue seeking, and take pains in seeking, as those that search, and this we must do with our heart, *i. e.* in sincerity and uprightness, and with our whole heart, *i. e.* with vigour and fervency, putting forth *all that is within us* in prayer; and those who thus *seek God* shall *find him*, and shall find him their bountiful rewarder, *Heb.* xi. 6. He never said to such, *Seek ye me in vain.*

15. ¶ Because ye have said, the LORD hath raised us up prophets in Babylon: 16. *Know* that thus saith th:

the LORD, of the king that ſitteth upon the throne of David, and of all the people that dwelleth in this city, *and* of your brethren that are not gone forth with you into captivity; 17. Thus ſaith the LORD of hoſts, Behold, I will ſend upon them, the ſword, the famine, and the peſtilence, and will make them like vile figs, that cannot be eaten, they are alſo evil. 18. And I will perſecute them with the ſword, with the famine, and with the peſtilence, and will deliver them to be removed to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be a curſe, and an aſtoniſhment, and an hiſſing, and a reproach among all the nations, whither I have driven them: 19. Becauſe they have not hearkned to my words, ſaith the LORD, which I ſent unto them by my ſervants the prophets, riſing up early, and ſending *them*, but ye would not hear, ſaith the LORD. 20. ¶ Hear ye therefore the word of the LORD, all ye of the captivity, whom I have ſent from Jeruſalem to Babylon: 21. Thus ſaith the LORD of hoſts, the God of Iſrael, of Ahab the ſon of Kolaiah, and of Zedekiah the ſon of Maaſeiah, which propheſy a lie unto you in my name, Behold, I will deliver them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and he ſhall ſlay them before your eyes. 22. And of them ſhall be taken up a curſe by all the captivity of Judah, which *are* in Babylon, ſaying, The LORD make thee like Zedekiah, and like Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roſted in the fire. 23. Becauſe they have committed villany in Iſrael, and have committed adultery with their neighbours wives, and have ſpoken lying words in my name, which I have not commanded them, even I know, and *am* a witneſs, ſaith the LORD.

Jeremiah having given great encouragement to thoſe among the captives, whom he knew to be ſerious and well affected, aſſuring them that God had very kind and favourable intentions concerning them, here turns to thoſe among them, who ſlighted the counſels and comforts that Jeremiah miniſtred to them, and depended upon what the falſe prophets flattered them with. When this letter came from Jeremiah, they would be ready to ſay, what needs he make himſelf ſo buſy, and take upon him to adviſe us, *The Lord hath raiſed us up prophets in Babylon*, ver. 15. We are ſatisfied with thoſe prophets, and can depend upon them, and have no occaſion to hear from any prophets in Jeruſalem. See the impudent wickedneſs of this people; as the prophets, when they propheſied lies, ſaid they had them from God, ſo the people, when they invited thoſe prophets thus to flatter them, fathered it upon God, and ſaid it was the Lord that raiſed them up thoſe prophets: Whereas thoſe that harden people in their ſins, and deceive them with falſe and groundleſs hopes of God's mercy, we may be ſure are no prophets of God's raiſing up. Theſe prophets of their own told them, that no more ſhould be carried captive, but thoſe who were in captivity ſhould ſhortly return. Now in anſwer to this,

1. The prophet here foretels the utter deſtruction of thoſe who remained ſtill at Jeruſalem, notwithſtanding what thoſe falſe prophets ſaid to the contrary. As for the *king* and *people* that *dwell in the city*, who, you think, will be ready to bid you welcome when you return, you are deceived, they ſhall be followed with one judgment after another, *ſword*, *famine*, and *peſtilence*, which ſhall cut off multitudes; and the poor and miſerable remains ſhall be *removed into all kingdoms of the earth*, ver. 16, 17, 18. And thus God *will make them*, or rather deal with them, *like vile figs*; they have made themſelves ſo by their wickedneſs, and God will uſe them accordingly, as the ſalt that has *loſt its ſavour*, which being good for nothing is caſt to the dunghil, and ſo are rotten figs. This refers to the viſion, and the prophecy upon it, which we had, *chap.* xxiv. And the reaſon given for theſe proceedings againſt them, is the ſame that has often been given, and will juſtify God in the eternal ruin of impenitent ſinners, *ver.* 19. *Becauſe they have not hearkened to my words. I called, but they refuſed.*

2. He foretels the judgment of God upon the falſe prophets in Babylon, who deceived the people of God there. He calls upon all the children of the captivity, who boaſted of them as prophets of God's raiſing up, *ver.* 20. ſtand ſtill and hear the doom of the prophets you are ſo fond of. The two prophets are named here, Ahab and Zedekiah, *ver.* 21. Obſerve, (1.) The crimes charged upon them, impiety and immorality: They *propheſied lies in God's name*, ver. 21. and again, *ver.* 23. they have *ſpoken lying words in my name*. Lying was bad, lying to the people of God, to delude them into a falſe hope was worſe; but fathering their lies upon the God of truth was worſt of all. And they that had the face to do that, no marvel if they could allow themſelves in the gratification of thoſe vile affections to which God in a way of righteous judgment *gave them up*. They have done *villany in Iſrael*, for *they have committed adultery with their neighbours wives*. Adultery is villany, and it is an aggravation of it, if it be villany in Iſrael, and in ſuch as pretend to be prophets, who by ſuch wickedneſſes manifeſtly diſprove their own pretenſions; God never ſent ſuch profligate wretches on his errands: He is the *Lord God of the holy prophets*, not of ſuch impure ones. Here it appears why they flattered others in their ſins, becauſe they could not reprove them without condemning themſelves. Theſe lewd practices of theirs they knew how to conceal from the eye of the world, that they might preſerve their credit; but *I know* it, *and am a witneſs, ſaith the Lord.* The moſt ſecret ſins are known to God; he can ſee the villany that is covered with the thickeſt cloke of hypocriſy, and there is a day coming when he will bring to light all theſe hidden works of darkneſs, and every man will appear in his own colours. (2.) The judgments threatned againſt them, *The king of Babylon ſhall ſlay them before your eyes*; nay, he ſhall put them to a miſerable death, *roſt them in the fire*, ver. 22. We may ſuppoſe it was not for their impiety and immorality that Nebuchadnezzar puniſhed them thus ſeverely, but ſedition, and ſome attempts of their turbulent ſpirits upon the publick peace, and ſtirring up the people to revolt and rebel. So much of their wickedneſs ſhall then be detected, and in ſuch a wretched manner they ſhall end their days, that their names ſhall be a curſe among the captives in Babylon, *ver.* 22. When men would imprecate the greateſt evil upon one they hated, they would think they could not load them with a heavier curſe in fewer words than to ſay, *The Lord make thee like Zedekiah, and like Ahab!* Thus were they made aſhamed of the prophets they had been proud of, and convinced at leaſt of their folly in hearkning to them. God's faithful prophets were ſometimes charged with being the troublers of the land, and as ſuch were tortured and ſlain; but their names were a bleſſing when they were gone, and their memory ſweet, not as theſe here. As malefactors are attended with infamy and diſgrace, ſo martyrs with glory and honour.

24. ¶ *Thus* ſhalt thou alſo ſpeak to Shemaiah the Nehelamite, ſaying, 25. Thus ſpeaketh the LORD of hoſts, the God of Iſrael, ſaying, Becauſe thou haſt ſent letters in thy name unto all the people that *are* at Jeruſalem, and to Zephaniah the ſon of Maaſeiah the prieſt, and to all the prieſts, ſaying, 26. The LORD hath made thee prieſt in the ſtead of Jehoiada the prieſt, that ye ſhould be officers in the houſe of the LORD, for every man *that is* mad, and maketh himſelf a prophet, that thou ſhouldſt put him in priſon and in the ſtocks: 27. Now therefore, Why haſt thou not reproved Jeremiah of Anathoth, which maketh himſelf a prophet to you? 28. For therefore he ſent unto us *in* Babylon, ſaying, This *captivity is* long, build ye houſes and dwell *in them*, and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them. 29. And Zephaniah the prieſt read this letter in the ears of Jeremiah the prophet. 30. ¶ Then came the word of the Lord unto Jeremiah, ſaying, 31. Send to all them of the captivity, ſaying, Thus ſaith the LORD, concerning Shemaiah the Nehelamite, Becauſe that Shemaiah hath propheſied unto you, and I ſent him not, and he cauſed you to truſt in a lie: 32. Therefore thus ſaith the LORD, Behold, I will puniſh Shemaiah the Nehelamite and his ſeed: he ſhall not have a man to dwell among this people, neither ſhall he behold the good that I will do for my people, ſaith the LORD, becauſe he hath taught rebellion againſt the LORD.

We have peruſed the contents of Jeremiah's letter to the captives in Babylon, who had reaſon with a great deal of thanks to God and him to acknowledge the receipt of it, and lay it up among their treaſures: But we cannot wonder if the falſe prophets they had among them were enraged at it, for it gave them their true character. Now here we are told concerning one of them,

1. How he diſcovers his malice againſt Jeremiah. This buſy fellow is called *Shemaiah the Nehelamite*, the *dreamer*, ſo the margin reads it, becauſe all his prophecies he pretended to have received from God in a dream. He had got a copy of Jeremiah's letter to the captives, or had heard it read, or information was given to him concerning it, and it nettled him exceedingly; and he will take pen in hand and anſwer it, yea, that he will: But how? He doth not write to Jeremiah in juſtification of his own miſſion, nor offer any rational arguments for the ſupport of his prophecies concerning the ſpeedy return of the captives; but he writes to the prieſts, thoſe faithful patrons of the falſe prophets, and inſtigates them to perſecute Jeremiah. He writes in his own name, not ſo much as pretending to have the peoples conſent to it, but as if he muſt be dictator to all mankind, he ſends a circular letter (as ſhould ſeem) among the prieſts at Jeruſalem, and the reſt of the people, probably by the ſame meſſengers that brought the letter from Jeremiah: But it is chiefly directed to Zephaniah, who was either the immediate ſon of Maaſeiah, or of the twenty fourth courſe

courſe of the prieſts, of which Maaſeiah was the father and head. He was not the high-prieſt, but ſagan, or ſuffragan to the high-prieſt, or in ſome other conſiderable poſt of command in the temple, as Paſhur, *chap.* xx. 1. Perhaps he was chairman of that committee of prieſts that was appointed in a particular manner to take cognizance of thoſe that pretended to be prophets, of which there were very many at this time, and to give judgment concerning them. Now,

1. He puts him and the other prieſts in mind of the duty of their place, *ver.* 26. *The Lord hath made thee a prieſt inſtead of Jehoiada the prieſt.* Some think he refers to the famous Jehoiada, that great reformer in the days of Joaſh; and (ſaith Mr. Gataker) he would inſinuate that this Zephaniah is for ſpirit and zeal ſuch another as he, and raiſed up, as he was, for the glory of God, and the good of the church; and therefore it was expected from him that he ſhould proceed againſt Jeremiah. Thus (ſaith he) there is no act ſo injurious or impious but that wicked wretches and falſe prophets will not only attempt it, but colour it alſo with ſome ſpecious pretence of piety, and zeal for God's glory, *Iſa.* lxvi. 5. *John* xvi. 2. or rather it was ſome other Jehoiada, his immediate predeceſſor in this office, who perhaps was carried to Babylon among the prieſts, *ver.* 1. Zephaniah is advanced ſooner than he expected to this place of truſt and power, and Shemaiah would have him think providence had preferred him that he might perſecute God's prophets, that he was come to this government for ſuch a time as this, and he was unjuſt and ungrateful if he did not thus improve his power, or rather abuſe it. Their hearts are wretchedly hardened who can juſtify the doing of miſchief by having a power to do it. Theſe prieſts buſineſs was to examine *every man that is mad, and makes himſelf a prophet:* God's faithful prophets are here repreſented as prophets of their own making, uſurpers of the office, and lay-intruders; and as men that were mad, acted by ſome dæmon, and not divinely inſpired; or, as diſtracted men, and men in a frenzy. Thus the characters of the falſe prophets are thrown upon the true ones; and if this had been indeed their character, they ought to be bound as mad-men, and puniſhed as pretenders, and therefore he concludes Jeremiah muſt be ſo done to. He doth not bid them examine whether Jeremiah could produce any proofs of his miſſion, and could make it to appear he was not mad; no, that is taken for granted, and when once he is put into an ill name, he muſt be run down of courſe.

2. He informs them of the letter which Jeremiah had written to the captives, *ver.* 28. He *ſent unto us in Babylon* with the authority of a prophet, ſaying, *This captivity is long*, and therefore reſolve to make the beſt of it. And what harm was there in this, that it ſhould be objected to him as a crime? The falſe prophets had formerly ſaid the captivity would never come, *chap.* xiv. 13. Jeremiah had ſaid it would come, and the event had already proved him in the right, which obliged them to give credit to him, who now ſaid it would be long, rather than to them who ſaid it would be ſhort, but had once before been found liars.

3. He demands judgment againſt him; taking it for granted that he is *mad*, and *makes himſelf a prophet*; he expects they ſhould order him to be put *in priſon* and *in the ſtocks*, ver. 26. that they ſhould thus puniſh him, and by putting him to diſgrace, poſſeſs the people with prejudices againſt him, ruin his reputation, and ſo prevent the giving of any credit to his prophecies at Jeruſalem, hoping if they could gain that point, neither would the captives in Babylon be influenced by him. Nay, he takes upon him to chide Zephaniah for his neglect, *ver.* 27. *Why haſt thou not rebuked and reſtrained Jeremiah of Anathoth?* See how inſolent and imperious theſe falſe prophets were grown, that though they were in captivity they would give law to the prieſts that were not only at liberty, but in power: It is common for thoſe that pretend to more knowledge than their neighbours to be ſo. Now, here is a remarkable inſtance of the hardneſs of the hearts of ſinners, and it is enough to make us all fear, *leſt our hearts be at any time hardned.* For here we find, (1.) That theſe ſinners would not be convinced by the cleareſt evidence. God had confirmed his word in the mouth of Jeremiah, it had *taken hold* of them, *Zech.* i. 6. and yet becauſe he doth not propheſy to them the *ſmooth things* they deſired, they are reſolved to look upon him as not duly called to the office of a prophet. None ſo blind as thoſe that will not ſee. (2.) That they would not be reclaimed and reformed by the moſt ſevere chaſtiſement. They were now ſent into a miſerable thraldom for *mocking the meſſengers of the Lord*, and *miſuſing his prophets*, this was the ſin for which God now contended with them, and yet in *their diſtreſs they treſpaſs yet more againſt the Lord*, 2 Chron. xxviii. 22. This very ſin they are notoriouſly guilty of in their captivity, which ſhews, that afflictions will not of themſelves cure men of their ſins, unleſs the grace of God work with them, but will rather exaſperate the corruptions they are intended to mortify; ſo true is that of Solomon, Prov. xxvii. 22. *Though thou ſhouldſt bray a fool in a mortar, yet will not his fooliſhneſs depart from him.*

2. How Jeremiah came to the knowledge of this, *ver.* 29. *Zephaniah read this letter in the ears of Jeremiah.* He did not deſign to do as Shemaiah would have him, but, as it ſhould ſeem, had a reſpect for Jeremiah, for we find him employed in meſſages to him as a *prophet*, *chap.* xxi. 1. and xxxvii. 3. and therefore protected him. He that continued in his dignity and power, ſtood more in awe of God and his judgments than he that was now a captive. Nay, he made Jeremiah acquainted with the contents of the letter, that he might ſee what enemies he had, even among the captives. Note, It is kindneſs to our friends to let them know their foes.

3. What was the ſentence paſt upon Shemaiah for writing this letter. God ſent him an anſwer, for to him Jeremiah committed his cauſe: it was ordered to be ſent not to him, but *to them of the captivity*, who encouraged and countenanced him, as if he had been a prophet of God's raiſing up, *ver.* 31, 32. Let them know,

1. That Shemaiah had made fools of them, he promiſed them peace in God's name, but God did not ſend him, he forged a commiſſion, and counterfeited the broadſeal of heaven to it, and made the people *to truſt in a lie*, and by preaching falſe comfort to them, deprived them of true comfort: nay, he had not only made fools of them, but, which was worſe, he had made traitors of them, he had *taught rebellion againſt the Lord*, as Hananiah had done, *chap.* xxviii. 16. And if vengeance ſhall be taken on them that rebel, much more on them that teach rebellion by their doctrine and example.

2. That at his end *he alſo ſhall be a fool*, as the expreſſion is, *chap.* xvii. 11. his name and family ſhall be extinct, and ſhall be buried in oblivion: he ſhall leave no iſſue behind him to bear up his name, his pedigree ſhall end in him; *he ſhall not have a man to dwell among this people*, and neither he, nor any that come from him, ſhall *behold the good that I will do for my people.* Note, Thoſe are unworthy to ſhare in God's favours to his church, that are not willing to ſtay his time for them. Shemaiah was angry at Jeremiah's advice to the captives, to ſee to the building up of their families in Babylon, that they might be *increaſed* and not *diminiſhed*, and therefore juſtly is he written childleſs there. Thoſe that ſlight the bleſſings of God's word, deſerve to loſe the benefit of them. See *Amos* vii. 16, 17.

CHAP. XXX.

The ſermon which we have in this and the following chapter, is of a very different complexion from all thoſe before: The prophet doth indeed, by direction from God, change his voice. Moſt he had ſaid hitherto was by way of reproof and threatning: but theſe two chapters are wholly taken up with precious promiſes of a return out of captivity, and that typical of the glorious things reſerved for the church in the days of the Meſſiah. The prophet is bid not only to preach this, but to write it, becauſe it is intended for the comfort of the generations to come, ver. 1, — 3. *It is here promiſed, that they ſhould hereafter have a joyful reſtoration.* 1. *Though they were now in a great deal of pain and terror.* ver. 4, — 7. 2. *Though their oppreſſors were very ſtrong*, ver, 8, —10. 3. *Though a full end was made of other nations, and they were not reſtored*, ver. 11. 4. *Though all means of their deliverance ſeemed to fail and be cut off*, ver. 12, — 14. 5. *Though God himſelf had ſent them into captivity, and juſtly, for their ſins*, ver. 15, 16. 6. *Though all about them looked upon their caſe as deſperate*, ver. 17. (2.) *That after their joyful reſtoration they ſhould have a happy ſettlement; that their city ſhould be rebuilt*, ver. 18. *Their numbers increaſed*, ver. 19, 20. *Their government eſtabliſhed*, ver. 21. *God's covenant with them renewed*, ver. 22. *and their enemies deſtroyed and cut off*, ver. 23. 24.

1. THE word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, ſaying, 2. Thus ſpeaketh the LORD God of Iſrael, ſaying, Write thee all the words that I have ſpoken unto thee in a book. 3. For lo, the days come, ſaith the LORD, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Iſrael and Judah, ſaith the LORD, and I will cauſe them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they ſhall poſſeſs it. 4. ¶ And theſe *are* the words that the LORD ſpake concerning Iſrael, and concerning Judah. 5. For thus ſaith the LORD, We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. 6. Aſk ye now, and ſee whether a man doth travail with child? wherefore do I ſee every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleneſs? 7. Alas, for that day *is* great, ſo that none *is* like it: it *is* even the time of Jacobs trouble, but he ſhall be ſaved out of it. 8. For it ſhall come to paſs in that day, ſaith the LORD of hoſts, *that* I will break his yoke from off thy neck, and will burſt thy bonds, and ſtrangers ſhall no more ſerve themſelves of him. 9. But they ſhall ſerve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raiſe up unto them.

Here, 1. Jeremiah is directed to *write* what God had ſpoken to him; which, perhaps, refers to all the foregoing prophecies;

he must write them and publish them, in hopes that they who had not profited by it upon once hearing it, might take more notice of it when in reading it they had leisure for a more considerate review. Or rather, it refers to the promises of their enlargement, which had been often mixed with his other discourses. He must collect them and put them together, and God will now add unto them many like words. He must write them for the generations to come, who should see them accomplished, and thereby have their faith in the prophecy confirmed. He must write it not *in a letter*, as that in the chapter before to the captives, but *in a book*, to be carefully preserved in the archives, or among the publick rolls or registers of the state. Daniel understood by these books when the captivity was about coming to an end, *Dan.* ix. 2. He must write it in a book, not in loose papers, for *the days come*, and are yet at a great distance, when *I will bring again the captivity of Israel and Judah*, great numbers of the ten tribes, with those of the two, *ver.* 3. And it must be written that it may be read then also, that so it may appear how exactly the accomplishment answers the prediction, which is one end of the writing of prophecies. It is intimated, that they shall be *beloved for their fathers sake*, Rom. xi. 28. for therefore God will bring them again to Canaan, because it was the land that *he gave to their fathers*, which therefore they shall *possess*.

2. He is directed *what to write:* The very words are such as the Holy Ghost teacheth, *ver.* 4. These are the words which God ordered to be written; and those promises which are written by his order, are as truly his word, as the ten commandments which were written with his finger.

1. He must write a description of the fright and consternation which the people were now in, and were likely to be still in upon every attack that the *Chaldeans* made upon them, which will much magnify both the wonder and the welcomeness of their deliverance, *ver.* 5. *We have heard a voice of trembling.* The shrieks of terror echoing to the alarms of danger. The false prophets told them they should have *peace*, but *there is fear, and not peace*, so the margin reads it: And no marvel that when *without are fightings, within are fears.* The men, even the men of war shall be quite overwhelmed with the calamities of their nation, shall sink under them, and yield to them, and shall look like *women in labour*, whose pains come upon them in great extremity, and they know they cannot escape them, *ver.* 6. You never heard of a man travailing with child, and yet here you find not here and there a timorous man, but *every man with his hands on his loins*, in the utmost anguish and agony, *as women in travail*, when they see their cities burnt, and their countries laid waste. But this pain is compared to that of a *woman in travail*, not to that of a death-bed, because it shall end in joy at last, and the pain like that of a travailing woman, shall be forgotten. *All faces* shall be *turned into paleness.* The word signifies not only such paleness as arises from a sudden fright, but that which is the effect of an ill habit of body, the jaundice, or green sickness. The prophet laments the calamity upon the foresight of it, *ver.* 7. *Alas, for that day is great*, a day of judgment, which is called the *great day*, the *great and terrible day of the Lord*, Joel ii. 31. Jude 6. great, so that *there has been none like it.* The last destruction of Jerusalem is thus spoken of by our Saviour as unparallelled, *Mat.* xxiv. 21. It is *even the time of Jacob's trouble*, a sad time when God's professing people shall be in distress above other people. The whole time of the captivity was a *time of Jacob's trouble*, and such times ought to be greatly lamented by all that are concerned for the welfare of Jacob, and the honour of the God of Jacob.

2. He must write the assurances which God had given, that a happy end should at length be put to these calamities. (1.) Jacob's troubles shall cease, *He shall be saved out of them.* Though the afflictions of the church may last long, they shall not last always. *Salvation belongs to the Lord*, and shall be wrought for his church. (2.) Jacob's troublers shall be disabled to do him any further mischief, and shall be reckoned with for the mischief they have done him, *ver.* 8. *The Lord of hosts*, who has all power in his hand, undertakes to do it, *I will break his yoke from off thy neck*, which has long lain so heavy, and hath so sorely galled thee, *I will burst thy bonds*, and restore thee to liberty and ease, and thou shalt no more be at the beck and command of strangers, shalt no more serve them, nor shall they any more *serve themselves of thee*, shall no more enrich themselves either by thy possessions, or by thy labours. And, (3.) That which crowns and compleats the mercy is, that they shall be restored to the free exercise of their religion again, *ver.* 9. They shall be delivered from serving their enemies, not that they may live at large, and do what they please, but that they may *serve the Lord their God, and David their king*, that they may come again into order, under the established government both in church and state. Therefore they were brought into trouble, and made to *serve their enemies*, because they had not *served the Lord their God* as they ought to have done, *with joyfulness and gladness of heart*, Deut. xxviii. 47. But when the time is come that they should be *saved out of their trouble*, God will prepare and qualify them for it, by giving them a *heart to serve him*; and will make it doubly comfortable, by giving them opportunity to serve him. Therefore we are *delivered out of the hands of our enemies*, that we may *serve God*, Luke i. 74, 75. And then deliverances out of temporal calamities are mercies indeed to us, when by them we find ourselves engaged to, and enlarged in the service of God. They shall serve their own God, and neither be inclined, as they had been of old in the day of their apostasy, nor compelled as they had been of late in the day of their captivity, to serve other Gods. They shall serve *David their king*, such governors as God should from time to time set over them, of the line of David, as Zerubbabel; or, at least, sitting on the *thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David*, as Nehemiah. But certainly this has a further meaning. The Chaldee paraphrase reads it, *they shall obey* or *hearken to the Messiah*; or *Christ*, the *Son of David, their king.* To him the Jewish interpreters apply it. That dispensation, which commenced at their return out of captivity, brought them to the Messiah. He is called *David their king*, because he was the *son of David*, Mat. xxii. 42. and he answered to the name, *Mat.* xx. 31, 32. David was an illustrious type of him both in his humiliation and exaltation. The covenant of royalty made with David, had principal reference to him, and in him the promises of that covenant had their full accomplishment. God gave him the *throne of his father David*, he *raised him up unto them, set him upon the holy hill of Zion.* God is often in the New Testament said to have *raised up Jesus*, raised him up as a king, *Acts* iii. 26. and xiii. 23, 33. Observe, (1.) Those that serve the Lord as their God must also serve *David their king*, must give up themselves to Jesus Christ, to be ruled by him: For all men must honour the Son, as they honour the Father, and come into the service and worship of God by him as Mediator. (2.) Those that are delivered out of spiritual bondage, must make it appear that they are so by giving up themselves to the service of Christ. They to whom he gives rest, must take his yoke upon them.

10. ¶ Therefore fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, saith the LORD, neither be dismayed, O Israel; for lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity, and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest and quiet, and none shall make *him* afraid. 11. For I *am* with thee, saith the LORD, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished. 12. For thus saith the LORD, Thy bruise *is* incurable, *and* thy wound *is* grievous. 13, *There is* none to plead thy cause, that thou mayest be bound up: thou hast no healing medicines. 14. All thy lovers have forgotten thee: they seek thee not, for I have wounded thee with the wound of an enemy, with the chastisement of a cruel one, for the multitude of thine iniquity: *because* thy sins were increased. 15. Why criest thou for thine affliction? thy sorrow *is* incurable, for the multitude of thine iniquity, *because* thy sins were increased, I have done these things unto thee. 16. Therefore all they that devour thee shall be devoured, and all thine adversaries, every one of them shall go into captivity: and they that spoil thee shall be a spoil, and all that prey upon thee will I give for a prey. 17. For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the LORD, because they called thee an outcast, *saying*, This *is* Zion, whom no man seeketh after.

In these verses, as in those foregoing, the deplorable case of the Jews in captivity is set forth, but many precious promises given them, that in due time they should be relieved, and a glorious salvation wrought for them.

1. God himself appeared against them; he scattered them, *ver.* 11. He did *all these things unto them*, ver. 15. All their calamities came from his hands, whoever were the instruments, he was the principal agent. And this made their case very sad, that God, even their own God, spoke concerning them, to pull down and to destory. Now, (1.) This was intended by him as a fatherly chastisement, and no other, *ver.* 11. *I will correct thee in measure*, or, *according to judgment*, with discretion, no more than thou deservest, nay, no more than thou canst well bear. What God doth against his people, is in a way of correction, and that correction is always moderated, and always proceeds from love. *I will not leave thee altogether unpunished*, as thou art ready to think I should, because of thy relation to me. Note, A profession of religion, though never so plausible, will be far from securing to us impunity in sin. God is no respecter of persons, but will shew his hatred of sin wherever he finds it, and that he hates it most in those that are nearest to him. God here corrects his people *for the multitude of their iniquity*, and *because their sins were increased*, ver. 14, 15. Are our sorrows multiplied at any time, and do they increase? we must acknowledge it is because our sins have been multiplied, and they have increased. Iniquities grow in us, and therefore trou-

troubles grow upon us. But (2.) What God intended as a fatherly chaſtiſement, they and others interpreted as an act of hoſtility; they looked upon him as having *wounded them with the wound of an enemy*, and *with the chaſtiſement of a cruel one*, ver. 14. as if he had deſigned their ruin, and neither mitigated the correction, nor had any mercy in reſerve for them. It did indeed ſeem as if God had dealt thus ſeverely with them, as if he had turned to be their enemy, and had fought againſt them, *Iſa.* lxiii. 10. Job complains that God was become cruel to him, and *multiplied his wounds*. When troubles are great and long, we have need carefully to watch over our own hearts, that we entertain not ſuch hard thoughts as theſe of God and his providence: His are the chaſtiſements of a merciful one, not of a cruel one, however they may appear.

2. Their friends forſook them, and were ſhy of them; none of thoſe who had courted them in their proſperity, would take notice of them now in their diſtreſs, *ver.* 13. It is commonly thus when families go to decay, thoſe hang off from them that had been their hangers on. In two caſes we are glad of the aſſiſtance of our friends, and need their ſervice: 1. If we be impeached, accuſed, or reproached, our friends we expect ſhould appear in vindication of us, ſhould ſpeak a good word for us, when we cannot put on a face to ſpeak for our ſelves: but here *there is none to plead thy cauſe*, none to ſtand up in thy defence, none to intercede for thee with thine oppreſſors; therefore God will *plead their cauſe*, for he might well wonder there was none to uphold a people that had been ſo much the favourites of heaven, *Iſa.* lxiii. 5. 2. If we be ſick, or ſore, or wounded, we expect our friends ſhould attend us, adviſe us, ſympathize with us, and, if occaſion be, lend a hand for the applying of *healing medicines*; but here there is none to do that, none to bind up thy wounds, and, by counſels and comforts, to make proper applications to thy caſe; nay, *ver.* 14. *All thy lovers have forgotten thee*; out of ſight out of mind; inſtead of ſeeking thee, they forſake thee. Such as this has often been the caſe of religion, and ſerious godlineſs in the world; thoſe that, from their education, profeſſion and hopeful beginnings, one might have expected ſhould have been its friends and lovers, its patrons and protectors, deſert it, forget it, and have nothing to ſay in its defence, nor will do any thing towards the healing of its wounds. Obſerve, *thy lovers have forgotten thee, for I have wounded thee:* When God is againſt a people, who will be for them? who can be for them, ſo as to do them any kindneſs? See *Job* xxx. 11. Now, upon this account, their caſe ſeemed deſperate, and paſt relief, *ver.* 12. *Thy bruiſe is incurable, thy wound grievous*, and, *ver.* 15. *thy ſorrow is incurable*, i. e. the condition of the Jews in captivity was ſuch, as no human power could redreſs the grievances of; there they were like a valley full of *dead and dry bones*, which nothing leſs than omnipotence can put life into. Who could imagine that a people ſo diminiſhed, ſo impoveriſhed, ſhould ever be reſtored to their own land, and re-eſtabliſhed there? So many were the aggravations of their calamity, that their ſorrow would not admit of any alleviation, but they ſeemed to be hardned in it, and their ſouls refuſed to be comforted, till divine conſolations proved ſtrong ones, too ſtrong to be born down, even by the floods of grief that overwhelmed them. *Thy ſorrow is incurable, becauſe thy ſins*, inſtead of being repented of, and forſaken, *were increaſed*. Note, Incurable griefs are owing to incurable luſts. Now in this deplorable condition they were looked upon with diſdain, *ver.* 17. *They called thee an outcaſt*, abandoned by all, abandoned to ruin; they ſaid, *This is Zion, whom no man ſeeketh after*. When they looked on the place where the city and temple had been built, they called that *an outcaſt*; now all was in ruins, there was no reſort to it, no reſidence in it, none asked the way to Zion, as formerly, *no man ſeeketh after* it. When they looked on the people that formerly dwelt in Zion, but were now in captivity (and we read of *Zion dwelling with the daughter of Babylon*, Zech. ii. 7.) they called them *outcaſts*; theſe are they who belong to Zion, and uſe to talk much of it, and weep at the remembrance of it, but *no man ſeeketh after* them, or enquires concerning them. Note, It is often the lot of Zion to be deſerted and deſpiſed by thoſe about her.

3. For all this God will work deliverance and ſalvation for them in due time. Though no other hand, nay, becauſe no other hand can, cure their wound, his will and ſhall. 1. Though he ſeemed to ſtand at a diſtance from them, yet he aſſures them of his preſence with them, his powerful and gracious preſence. *I will ſave thee*, ver. 10. *I am with thee to ſave thee*, ver. 11. When they are in their troubles, he is with them to ſave them from ſinking under them; when the time is come for their deliverance, he is with them to be ready upon the firſt opportunity to ſave them out of their trouble. 2. Though they were at a diſtance, remote from their own land, *afar* off in *the land of their captivity*, yet there ſhall ſalvation find them out, thence ſhall it fetch them, them and their *ſeed*, for they alſo ſhall be known among the Gentiles, and diſtinguiſhed from them, that they may *return*, ver. 10. 3. Though they were now full of fears, and continually alarmed, yet the time ſhall come when they *ſhall be in reſt and quiet*, ſafe and eaſy, *and none ſhall make them afraid*, ver. 10. 4. Though the nations into which they were diſperſed ſhould be brought to ruin, yet they ſhould be preſerved from that ruin, *ver.* 11. *Though I make a full end of the nations whither I have ſcattered thee*, and there might be danger of thy being loſt among them, *yet I will not make a full end of thee*. It was promiſed, that in the peace of theſe nations they ſhould *have peace*, chap. xxix. 7. and yet in the deſtruction of theſe nations they ſhould eſcape deſtruction. God's church may ſometimes be brought very low, but he *will not make a full end of* it, *chap.* v. 10, 18. 5. Though God correct them, and juſtly, for their ſins, their manifold tranſgreſſions, and mighty ſins, yet he will return in mercy to them, and even their ſin ſhall not prevent their deliverance, when God's time is come. 6. Though their adverſaries were mighty, God will bring them down, and break their power, *ver.* 16. *All that devour thee ſhall be devoured*, and thus Zion's cauſe will be pleaded, and will be made to appear to all the world a righteous cauſe: Thus Zion's deliverance will be brought about by the deſtruction of her oppreſſors; and thus her enemies will be recompenſed for all the injury they have done her; for *there is a God that judgeth in the earth*, a God *to whom vengeance belongs*; they *ſhall every one of them*, without exception, *go into captivity, and they that* now *ſpoil thee*, the day will come when they *ſhall be a ſpoil*; they that *lead into captivity, ſhall go into captivity*, Rev. xiii. 10. This might ſerve to oblige the preſent conquerors to uſe their captives well, becauſe the wheel would turn round, and the day would come when they alſo ſhould be captives, and let them do now as they would then be done by. 7. Though the wound ſeem incurable, God will make a cure of it, *ver.* 17. *I will reſtore health unto thee*. Be the diſeaſe never ſo dangerous, the patient is ſafe if God undertake the cure.

4. Upon the whole matter they are cautioned againſt inordinate fear and grief, for in theſe precious promiſes there is enough to ſilence both. 1. They muſt not tremble, as thoſe that have no hope, in the apprehenſion of future, further trouble, that might threaten them, *ver.* 10. *Fear thou not, O my ſervant Jacob, neither be diſmayed*. Note, Thoſe that are God's ſervants, muſt not give way to diſquieting fears, whatever difficulties and dangers may be before them. 2. They muſt not ſorrow as thoſe that have no hope, for the troubles which at preſent they lay under, *ver.* 15. *Why crieſt thou for thine affliction?* It is true thy carnal confidences fail thee, creatures are phyſicians of no value, but *I will heal thy wound*, and therefore, *Why crieſt thou?* Why doſt thou fret and complain thus? It is *for thy ſin*, ver. 14, 15. and therefore, inſtead of repining, thou ſhouldſt be repenting; *Wherefore ſhould a man complain for the puniſhment of his ſins?* The iſſue will be good at laſt, and therefore *rejoice in hope*.

18. ¶ Thus ſaith the LORD, Behold, I will bring again the captivity of Jacobs tents, and have mercy on his dwelling-places: and the city ſhall be builded upon her own heap, and the palace ſhall remain after the manner thereof. 19. And out of them ſhall proceed thankſgiving, and the voice of them that make merry: and I will multiply them, and they ſhall not be few; I will alſo glorify them, and they ſhall not be ſmall. 20. Their children alſo ſhall be as aforetime, and their congregation ſhall be eſtabliſhed before me, and I will puniſh all that oppreſs them. 21. And their nobles ſhall be of themſelves, and their governor ſhall proceed from the midſt of them, and I will cauſe him to draw near, and he ſhall approach unto me: for who *is* this that engaged his heart to approach unto me? ſaith the LORD. 22. And ye ſhall be my people, and I will be your God. 23. Behold, the whirlwind of the LORD goeth forth with fury, a continuing whirlwind, it ſhall fall with pain upon the head of the wicked. 24. The fierce anger of the LORD ſhall not return, until he have done *it*, and until he have performed the intents of his heart: in the latter days ye ſhall conſider it.

We have here further intimations of the favour God had in reſerve for them after the days of their calamity were over. It is promiſed,

1. That the city and temple ſhould be rebuilt, *ver.* 18. *Jacob's tents*, and *his dwelling-places*, felt the effects of *the captivity*, for they lay in ruins when the inhabitants were carried away captives; but when they are returned the habitations ſhall be repaired, and raiſed up out of their ruins, and therein God will *have mercy upon their dwelling-places*, that had been monuments of his juſtice: Then *the city* of Jeruſalem *ſhall be built upon her own heap*, her own hill, though now it be no better than a *ruinous heap*. The ſituation was unexceptionable, and therefore it ſhall be rebuilt upon the ſame ſpot of ground. He that can *make of a city a heap*, Iſa. xxv. 1. can, when he pleaſeth, *make of a heap a city* again. *The palace*, i. e. the temple, God's palace, *ſhall remain after the manner thereof*, it ſhall be built after the old model; and the ſervice of God ſhall be conſtantly kept up there, and attended as formerly.

2. That

2. That the ſacred feaſts ſhould again be ſolemnized, *ver.* 19. *Out of* the city, and the temple, and all the dwelling-places of Jacob, *ſhall proceed thankſgiving, and the voice of them that make merry.* They ſhall go with expreſſions of joy to the temple-ſervice, and with the like ſhall return from it. Obſerve, the voice of *thankſgiving* is the ſame with *the voice of them that make merry*; for whatever is the matter of our joy, ſhould be the matter of our praiſe: *Is any merry? let him ſing pſalms.* What makes us chearful, let it make us thankful: *Serve the Lord with gladneſs.*

3. That the people ſhould be multiplied and increaſed, and made conſiderable; *they ſhall not be few, they ſhall not be ſmall*; but ſhall become numerous and illuſtrious, and make a figure among the nations; for *I will multiply them*, and *I will glorify them*; it is for the honour of the church to have many added to it that ſhall be ſaved; this would make them to be of ſome weight among their neighbours: Let a people be never ſo much diminiſhed and deſpiſed, God can multiply and glorify them. They ſhall be reſtored to their former honour, *their children ſhall be as aforetime*, playing in the ſtreets, *Zech.* viii. 5. they ſhall inherit their parents eſtates and honours as formerly; *and their congregation ſhall*, both in civil and ſacred things, *be eſtabliſhed before me:* There ſhall be a conſtant ſucceſſion of faithful magiſtrates in the congregation of the elders to eſtabliſh that, and of faithful worſhippers in the congregation of the ſaints: As one generation paſſeth away, another ſhall be raiſed up, and ſo the *congregation ſhall be eſtabliſhed before* God.

4. That they ſhall be bleſſed with a good government, *ver.* 21. *Their nobles* and judges *ſhall be of themſelves*, of their own nation, and they ſhall no longer be ruled by ſtrangers, and enemies; *their governor ſhall proceed from the midſt of them*, ſhall be one that has been a ſharer with them in the afflictions of their captive ſtate; and this has reference to Chriſt our *governor*, *David our king*, ver. 9. he is of our ſelves, *in all things made like unto his brethren*; *and I will cauſe him to draw near.* This may be underſtood, either, (1.) Of the people, Jacob and Iſrael, *I will cauſe* them *to draw near* to me in the temple ſervice, as formerly, to come into covenant with me, as *my people*, ver. 22. to *approach to me* in communion, *for who* hath *engaged his heart*, made a covenant with it, and brought it into bonds, *to approach unto me:* How few are there that do ſo! None can do it but by the ſpecial grace of God, *cauſing them to draw near.* Note, Whenever we approach to God in any holy ordinance, we muſt engage our hearts to do it; the heart muſt be prepared for the duty, employed in it, and kept cloſe to it: The heart is the main thing that God looks at, and requires, but it is deceitful, and will ſtart aſide, if a great deal of care and pains be not taken to engage it to bind this *ſacrifice with cords.* Or, (2.) It may be underſtood of the governor, for it is a ſingle perſon that is ſpoken of; *their governor ſhall* be duly called to his office, ſhall *draw near* to God to conſult him upon all occaſions; God *will cauſe him to approach to* him, for otherwiſe, who would engage to take care of ſo weak a people, and let this ruin come under their hand? But when God has work to do, though attended with many diſcouragements, he will raiſe up inſtruments to do it. But it looks farther to Chriſt, to him as Mediator. Note, 1. The proper work and office of Chriſt, as Mediator, is *to draw near, and approach unto* God, not for himſelf only, but for us, and in our name and ſtead, as the High-prieſt of our profeſſion: The prieſts are ſaid to draw nigh to God, *Lev.* x. 3. and xxi. 17. *Moſes drew near*, Exod. xx. 21. 2. God the Father did *cauſe* Jeſus Chriſt thus *to draw near and approach to* him as Mediator: He commanded and appointed him to do it, he ſanctified and ſealed him, anointed him for this purpoſe, and accepted of him, and declared himſelf well pleaſed in him. 3. Jeſus Chriſt being cauſed by the Father to approach unto him as Mediator, did *engage his heart to* do it, *i. e.* he bound and obliged himſelf to it, *undertook for his heart*, ſo ſome read it; for his ſoul, that, in the fulneſs of time, it ſhould be *made an offering for ſin:* His own voluntary ſuſception, in compliance with his Father's will, and in compaſſion to fallen man, engaged him, and then his own honour kept him to it. It alſo intimates that he was hearty and reſolute, free and chearful in it, and made nothing of the difficulties that lay in his way, *Iſa.* lxiii. 3, 4, 5. 4. Jeſus Chriſt was in all this truly wonderful; we may well ask, with admiration, *Who is this that* thus *engageth his heart* to ſuch an undertaking?

5. That they ſhall be taken again into covenant with God, according to the covenant made with their fathers, *ver.* 22. *Ye ſhall be my people*, and it is God's good work in us that makes us *to him a people, a people for his name*, Acts xv. 14. *and I will be your God*; and it is his good will to us that is the ſummary of that part of the covenant.

6. That their enemies ſhall be reckoned with and brought down, *ver.* 20. *I will puniſh all* them *that oppreſs them*, ſo that it ſhall appear to all a dangerous thing to *touch God's anointed*, Pſalm cv. 15. The two laſt verſes come under this head, *The whirlwind of the Lord ſhall fall with pain upon the head of the wicked.* Theſe two verſes we had before, *chap.* xxiii. 19, 20. there they were a denunciation of God's wrath againſt the wicked hypocrites in Iſrael, here, againſt the wicked oppreſſors of Iſrael; the expreſſions exactly agreeing, ſpeaks the ſame with that, *Iſa.* li. 22, 23. *I will take the cup of trembling out of thy hand, and put it into the hand of them that afflict thee.* The wrath of God againſt the wicked is here repreſented to be, 1. Very terrible, like a whirlwind, ſurprizing and irreſiſtible. 2. Very grievous, it *ſhall fall with pain upon their heads*, they ſhall be as ill hurt as frightned. 3. It ſhall purſue them; whirlwinds uſe to be ſhort, but this ſhall be *a continuing whirlwind.* 4. It ſhall accompliſh that for which it is ſent, *the anger of the Lord ſhall not return, till he have done it*; the purpoſes of his wrath, as well as the purpoſes of his love, will all be fulfilled; he will *perform the intents of his heart:* And, 5. Thoſe that will not lay this to heart now, will then be unable to put off the thoughts of it, *in the latter days ye ſhall conſider it*, when it will be too late to prevent it.

CHAP. XXXI.

This chapter goes on with the good words, and comfortable words, which we had in the chapter before, for the encouragement of the captives, aſſuring them that God would in due time return them or their children to their own land, and make them a great and happy nation again, eſpecially by ſending them the Meſſiah, in whoſe kingdom and grace many of theſe promiſes were to have their full accompliſhment. 1. *They ſhall be reſtored to peace and honour, and joy, and great plenty*, ver. 1,—14. 2. *Their ſorrow for the loſs of their children ſhall be at an end*, ver. 15,—17. 3. *They ſhall repent of their ſins, and God will graciouſly accept them in their repentance*, ver. 18,—20. 4. *They ſhall be multiplied and increaſed, both their children and their cattle, and not be cut off and diminiſhed as they had been*, ver. 21,—30. 5. *God will renew his covenant with them, and enrich it with ſpiritual bleſſings*, ver. 31,—34. 6. *Theſe bleſſings ſhall be ſecured to theirs after them, even to the ſpiritual ſeed of Iſrael for ever*, ver. 35,—37. 7. *As an earneſt of this, the city of Jeruſalem ſhall be rebuilt*, ver. 38,—40. *Theſe exceeding great and precious promiſes were firm foundations of hope, and full fountains of joy, to the poor captives; and we alſo may apply them to our ſelves, and mix faith with them.*

1. AT the ſame time, ſaith the LORD, will I be the God of all the families of Iſrael, and they ſhall be my people. 2. Thus ſaith the LORD, The people *which were* left of the ſword, found grace in the wilderneſs; *even* Iſrael, when I went to cauſe him to reſt. 3. The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, *ſaying*, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlaſting love: therefore with loving kindneſs have I drawn thee. 4. Again I will build thee, and thou ſhalt be built, O virgin of Iſrael, thou ſhalt again be adorned with thy tabrets, and ſhalt go forth in the dances of them that make merry. 5. Thou ſhalt yet plant vines upon the mountains of Samaria, the planters ſhall plant, and ſhall eat *them* as common things. 6. For there ſhall be a day, *that* the watchmen upon the mount Ephraim ſhall cry, Ariſe ye, and let us go up to Zion unto the LORD our God. 7. For thus ſaith the LORD, Sing with gladneſs for Jacob, and ſhout among the chief of the nations: publiſh ye, praiſe ye, and ſay, O LORD, ſave thy people the remnant of Iſrael. 8. Behold, I will bring them from the north-country, and gather them from the coaſts of the earth, *and* with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child, and her that travaileth with child together, a great company ſhall return thither. 9. They ſhall come with weeping, and with ſupplications will I lead them: I will cauſe them to walk by the rivers of waters, in a ſtraight way wherein they ſhall not ſtumble: for I am a father to Iſrael, and Ephraim is my firſt-born.

God here aſſures his people,

1. That he will again take them into a covenant relation to himſelf, from which they ſeemed to have been cut off. *At the ſame time*, when God's anger breaks out againſt *the wicked*, chap. xxx. 24. his own people ſhall be owned by him as the children of his love: *I will be the God*, i. e. I will ſhew my ſelf to *be the God of all the families of Iſrael*, ver. 1. not of the two tribes only, but of all the tribes; not of the houſe of Aaron only, and the families of Levi, but of all their families; not only their ſtate in general, but their particular families, and the intereſts of them ſhall have the benefit of a ſpecial relation to God. Note, The families of good people, in their family capacity, may apply themſelves to God, and ſtay themſelves upon him as their God. If we and our houſes ſerve the Lord, we and our houſes ſhall be protected and bleſſed by him, *Prov.* iii. 33.

2. That he will do for them in bringing them out of Babylon, as he had done for their fathers when he delivered them out of Egypt, and as he had purpoſed to do when he firſt took them to be his people. (1.) He puts them in mind what he did for their fathers

thers when he brought them out of Egypt; *ver.* 2. they were then, as these were, a *people left of the sword*, that sword of Pharaoh, with which he cut off all the male children as soon as they were born, a bloody sword indeed they had narrowly escaped, and that sword with which he threatned to cut them off, when he pursued them to the Red sea: They were then *in the wilderness*, where they seemed to be lost and forgotten, as these were now in a strange land, and yet they *found grace in* God's sight, were owned and highly honoured by him, and blest with wonderful instances of his peculiar favour, and he was at this time going *to cause them to rest* in Canaan. Note, When we are brought very low, and insuperable difficulties appear in the way of our deliverance, it is good to remember, that it has been so with the church formerly, and yet it has been raised up from its low estate, and has got to Canaan through all the hardships of a wilderness; and God is still the same. (2.) They put him in mind of what God had done for their fathers, intimating, that they now saw not such signs, and were ready to ask, as Gideon did, *Where are all the wonders that our fathers told us of?* ver. 3. It is true, *The Lord hath appeared of old unto me*, in Egypt, in the wilderness, *hath appeared* with me, and for me, hath been seen in his glory as my God; the years of ancient times were glorious years; but now it is otherwise, what good will it do us, that he *appeared of old* to us, when now he is *a God that hides himself* from us? *Isa.* xlv. 15. Note, It is hard to take comfort from former smiles under present frowns. (3.) To this he answers, with an assurance of the constancy of his love, *Yea, I have loved thee*, not only with an ancient love, but *with an everlasting love*, a love that shall never fail, however the comforts of it may for a time be suspended. It is *an everlasting love, therefore have I* extended or *drawn* out *loving-kindness* unto *thee* also, as well as to thine ancestors; or, *with loving-kindness have I drawn thee* to my self as thy God, from all the idols to which thou hadst turned aside. Note, It is the happiness of those, who are through grace interested in the love of God, that it is *an everlasting love*; from everlasting in the counsels of it, to everlasting in the continuance and consequences of it; and that nothing can separate them from that love: And those whom God loves with this love, he will draw them into covenant and communion with himself, by the influences of his Spirit upon their souls; he will *draw them with loving-kindness*, with the cords of a man, and bands of love, than which no attractive can be more powerful.

3. That he will again form them into a people, and give them a very joyful settlement in their own land, *ver.* 4, 5. Is the church of God his house, his temple? Is it now in ruins? It is so; but, *Again I will build thee, and thou shalt be built.* Are the parts of this building dispersed? they shall be collected, and put together again, each in its place. If God undertake to build them, they shall be built, whatever opposition may be given to it. Is *Israel* a beautiful *virgin?* Is she now stripped of her ornaments, and reduced to a melancholy state? She is so; but *thou shalt again be adorned*, and made fine, adorned *with thy tabrets*, or timbrels, the ornaments of thy chamber, and made merry: They shall resume their harps, which had been hung upon the willow-trees, shall tune them, and shall themselves be in tune to make use of them: They shall be adorned with their tabrets, for now their mirth and musick shall be seasonable, it shall be a proper time for it, God in his providence shall call them to it, and then it shall be an ornament to them; whereas tabrets, at a time of common calamity, when God called to mourning, were a shame to them: Or, it may refer to their use of tabrets in the solemnizing of their religious feasts, and their *going forth in dances* then, as the *daughters of Shiloh*, Judg. xxi. 19, 21. And then our mirth is indeed an ornament to us, when we serve God, and honour him with it. Is the joy of the city maintained by the products of the country? It is so; and therefore it is promised, *ver.* 5. *Thou shalt yet plant vines upon the mountains of Samaria*, which had been the head city of the kingdom of Israel, in opposition to that of Judah; but they shall now be united, *Ezek.* xxxvii. 22. and there shall be such a perfect peace and security, that men shall apply themselves wholly to the improvement of their ground; *the planters shall plant*, not fearing the soldiers coming to eat the fruits of what they had planted, or to pluck it up; but they themselves *shall eat them* freely, *as common things*, not forbidden fruits, not forbidden by the law of God, as they were till the fifth year, *Lev.* xix. 13, 14, 15. not forbidden by the owners, because there shall be such plenty as to yield enough for all, for each.

4. That they shall have liberty and opportunity to worship God in the ordinances of his own appointment, and shall have both invitations and inclinations to do so, *ver.* 6. *There shall be a day*, and a glorious day it will be, when *the watchmen upon mount Ephraim*, that are set to stand centinel there to give notice of the approach of the enemy, finding that all is very quiet, and there is no appearance of danger, shall desire for a time to be discharged from their post, that they may *go up to Zion*, to praise God for the publick peace. Or, *the watchmen*, that tend the vineyards, spoken of, *ver.* 5. shall stir up themselves, and one another, and all their neighbours, to go and keep the solemn feasts at Jerusalem. Now this implies, that the service of God shall be again set up in Zion, that there shall be a general resort to it, with much affection, and mutual excitement, as in David's time, *Psalm* cxxii. 1. But that which is most observable here is, *that the watchmen of Ephraim*, are forward to promote the worship of God at Jerusalem, whereas, when time was, *the watchmen of Ephraim was hatred against the house of his God*, Hos. ix. 8. and, instead of inviting people to Zion, laid snares for those that set their faces thitherward, *Hos.* v. 1. Note, God can make those who have been enemies to religion, and the true worship of God, to become encouragers of it, and leaders in it. This promise was to have its full accomplishment in the days of the Messiah, when the gospel should be preached to all these countries, and a general invitation thereby given into the church of Christ, of which Zion was a type.

5. That God shall have the glory, and the church both the honour and comfort of this blessed change, *ver.* 7. *Sing with gladness for Jacob*, i. e. let all her friends and well-wishers rejoice with her, *Deut.* xxxii. 43. *Rejoice ye Gentiles with his people*, Rom. xv. 10. The restoration of Jacob will be taken notice of by all the neighbours, it will be matter of joy to them all, and they shall all join with Jacob in his joys, and thereby pay him respect, and put a reputation upon him: Even *the chief of the nations*, that make the greatest figure, shall think it an honour to them to congratulate the restoration of Jacob, and shall do themselves the honour to send their ambassadors on that errand. *Publish ye, praise ye*; in publishing these tidings, praise the God of Israel, praise the Israel of God, speak honourably of both. The publishers of the gospel must do it with *praise*, and therefore it is often spoken of in the *Psalms*, as mingled with *praises*, Psal. lxvii. 2, 3. and xcvi. 2, 3. What we either bring to others, or take to our selves the comfort of, we must be sure to give God the praise of. *Praise ye, and say, O Lord, save thy people*, i. e. perfect their salvation, go on to save *the remnant of Israel*, that are yet in bondage, as, *Psalm* cxxvi. 3, 4. Note, When we are praising God for what he has done, we must call upon him for the future favours which his church is in need and expectation of; and in praying to him, we really *praise* him, and give him glory; he takes it so.

6. That, in order to a happy settlement in their own land, they shall have a joyful return out of the land of their captivity, and a very comfortable passage homeward, *ver.* 8, 9. and this beginning of mercy should be to them a pledge of all the other blessings here promised. 1. Though they are scattered to places far remote, yet they shall be brought together, *from the north country, and from the coasts of the earth*; wherever they are, God will find them out. 2. Though many of them are very unfit for travel, yet that shall be no hindrance to them, *the blind and the lame* shall come, such a good will shall they have to their journey, and such a good heart upon it, that they shall not make their blindness and lameness an excuse for staying where they are. Their companions will be ready to help them, will be *eyes to the blind, and legs to the lame*, as good christians ought to be to one another in their travels heavenward, *Job* xxix. 15. But, above all, their God will help them; and let none plead he is blind, that has God for his guide; or lame, that has God for his strength. *The women with child* are heavy, and it is not fit they should undertake such a journey, much less those *that travail with child*; and yet, when it is to return to Zion, neither the one nor the other shall make any difficulty of it. Note, When God calls, we must not plead any inability to come; for he that calls us will help us, will strengthen us. 3. Though they seem to be diminished, and to become few in numbers, yet, when they come all together, they shall be *a great company*; and so will God's spiritual Israel be, when there shall be a general rendezvouz of them, though now they are but a little flock. 4. Though their return will be matter of joy to them, yet prayers and tears will be both their stores and their artillery, *ver.* 9. *They shall come with weeping, and with supplications*; *weeping* for sin, *supplication* for pardon; for *the goodness of God* shall *lead them to repentance*; and they shall weep with more bitterness and more tenderness for sin, when they are delivered out of their captivity, than ever they did when they were groaning under it. *Weeping and praying* do well together; tears put life into prayers, and express the liveliness of them, and prayers help to *wipe away tears*. *With favours will I lead them*, so the margin reads it; in their journey they shall be compassed with God's favours, the fruits of his favour. 5. Though they have a perilous journey, yet they shall be safe under a divine conduct and convoy. Is the country they pass through dry and thirsty? *I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters*, not the waters of a land-flood, which fail in summer. Is it a wilderness where there is no road, no track? *I will cause them to walk in a straight way*, which they shall not miss. Is it a rough and rocky country? yet *they shall not stumble*. Note, Whithersoever God gives his people a clear call, he will either find them, or make them a ready way; and while we are following providence, we may be sure providence will not be wanting to us. And, lastly, here is a reason given why God will take all this care of his people; *for I am a father to Israel*, a father that begat him, and therefore will maintain him, that have the care and compassion of a father for him, *Psalm* ciii. 13. *and Ephraim is my first-born*, even *Ephraim*, that, having gone astray from God, was *no more worthy to be called a son*, yet shall be owned as a *first-born*, particularly dear, and heir of a double portion of blessings. The same reason that

was given for their releaſe out of Egypt, is given for their releaſe out of Babylon; they are free-born, and therefore muſt not be enſlaved; are born to God, and therefore muſt not be the ſervants of men. *Exod.* iv. 22, 23. *Iſrael is my ſon, my firſt-born, let my ſon go, that he may ſerve me.* If we take God for our Father, and join our ſelves to *the church of the firſt-born*, we may be aſſured that we ſhall want nothing that is good for us.

10. ¶ Hear the word of the LORD, O ye nations, and declare *it* in the iſles afar off, and ſay, He that ſcattered Iſrael will gather him, and keep him, as a ſhepherd *doth* his flock. 11. For the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and ranſomed him from the hand of *him that was* ſtronger than he. 12. Therefore they ſhall come and ſing in the height of Zion, and ſhall flow together to the goodneſs of the LORD, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock and of the herd: and their ſoul ſhall be as a watered garden, and they ſhall not ſorrow any more at all. 13. Then ſhall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together: for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their ſorrow. 14. And I will ſatiate the ſoul of the prieſts with fatneſs, and my people ſhall be ſatisfied with my goodneſs, ſaith the LORD. 15. ¶ Thus ſaith the LORD, A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation *and* bitter weeping: Rahel weeping for her children, refuſed to be comforted for her children, becauſe they *were* not. 16. Thus ſaith the LORD, Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work ſhall be rewarded, ſaith the LORD, and they ſhall come again from the land of the enemy. 17. And there is hope in thine end, ſaith the LORD, that *thy* children ſhall come again to their own border.

This paragraph is much to the ſame purpoſe with the laſt, publiſhing to the world, as well as to the church, the purpoſes of God's love concerning his people. This is a *word of the Lord*, which the *nations* muſt *hear*, for it is a prophecy of a work *of the Lord*, which the nations cannot but take notice of: Let them hear the prophecy, that they may the better underſtand and improve the performance: And let them that hear it themſelves, declare it to others; *declare it in the iſles afar off:* It will be a piece of news that will ſpread all the world over: It will look very great in hiſtory, let us ſee how it looks in prophecy. It is foretold,

1. That thoſe that are diſperſed ſhall be brought together again from their diſperſions: *He that ſcattered Iſrael will gather him*; for he knows whither he ſcattered them, and therefore where to find them, *ver.* 10. *Una eademque manus vulnus opemque tulit.* And when he has gathered him into one body, one fold, he will *keep him, as a ſhepherd doth his flock*, from being ſcattered again.

2. That thoſe that are ſold and alienated ſhall be redeemed and brought back, *ver.* 11. Though the enemy that had got poſſeſſion *of him was ſtronger than he*, yet *the Lord*, who is ſtronger than all, *hath redeemed and ranſomed him*, not by price, but by power, as of old out of the Egyptians hands.

3. That with their liberty they ſhall have plenty and joy, and God ſhall be honoured and ſerved with it, *ver.* 12, 13. When they are returned to their own land, *they ſhall come and ſing in the high place of Zion*; on the top of that holy mountain, they ſhall ſing to the praiſe and glory of God: We read they did ſo when the foundation of the temple was laid there, they *ſang together, praiſing and giving thanks to the Lord*, Ezra iii. 11. They *ſhall flow together to the goodneſs of the Lord*, i. e. they ſhall flock in great numbers, and with great forwardneſs and chearfulneſs, as ſtreams of water, *to the goodneſs of the Lord*, i. e. to the temple, where he cauſeth his goodneſs to paſs before his people: They ſhall come together in ſolemn aſſemblies, to *praiſe him for his goodneſs*, and to pray for the fruits of it, and the continuance of it; they ſhall come to bleſs him for his goodneſs, in giving them *wheat, and wine, and oil, and the young of the flock and of the herd*, which, now they have obtained their freedom, they have an unconteſted property in, and the quiet and peaceable enjoyment of; and which therefore they honour God with the firſt-fruits of, and out of which they bring offerings to his altar. Note, It is comfortable to obſerve *the goodneſs of the Lord* in the gifts of common providence, and even in them to taſte covenant love. And having plenty, plenty out of want and ſcarcity, they ſhall greatly rejoice, *their ſoul ſhall be as a watered garden*, flouriſhing and fruitful, *Iſa.* lviii. 11. pleaſant and flagrant, and abounding in all good things. Note, Our ſouls are never valuable as gardens, but when they are watered with the dews of God's Spirit and grace. It is a precious promiſe that follows, and which will not have its full accompliſhment any where on this ſide the height of the heavenly Zion, that *they ſhall not ſorrow any more at all*; for it is only in that new Jeruſalem that *all tears ſhall be wiped away*, Rev. xxi. 4. however, ſo far it was fulfilled to the returned captives, that they had not any more thoſe cauſes for ſorrow that they had had; and therefore, *ver.* 13. *young men and old ſhall rejoice together*; ſo grave ſhall the young men be in their joys, as to keep company with the old men, and ſo tranſported ſhall the old men be, as to aſſociate with the young. *Salva res eſt, ſaltat ſenex.* God *will turn their mourning into joy*, their faſts into ſolemn feaſts, *Zech.* viii. 19. It was in the return out of Babylon, that they *who ſowed in tears*, were made to *reap in joy*, Pſalm cxxvi. 5, 6. Thoſe are comforted indeed, whom God comforts, and may forget their troubles, when he *makes them* to *rejoice from their ſorrow*; not only rejoice after it, but rejoice from it; their joy ſhall borrow luſtre from their ſorrow, which ſhall ſerve as a foil to it; and the more they think of their troubles, the more ſhall they rejoice in their deliverance.

4. That both the miniſters, and thoſe they miniſter to, ſhall have abundant ſatisfaction in what God gives them, *ver.* 14. *I will ſatiate the ſoul of the prieſts with fatneſs*, i. e. there ſhall be ſuch plenty of ſacrifices brought to the altar, that they who *live upon the altar* ſhall live very comfortably, they and their families ſhall be *ſatiated with fatneſs*; they ſhall have enough, and that of the beſt; *and my people ſhall be ſatisfied with my goodneſs*; and ſhall think there is enough in that to make them happy, and ſo there is: God's *people* have an abundant ſatisfaction in God's *goodneſs*, though they have but little of this world: Let them be ſatisfied of God's loving-kindneſs, and they will be ſatisfied with it, and deſire no more to make them happy. All this is applicable to the ſpiritual bleſſings which the redeemed of the Lord enjoy by Jeſus Chriſt, infinitely more valuable than corn, and wine, and oil, and the ſatisfaction of ſoul which they have in the enjoyment of them.

5. That thoſe particularly, who had been in ſorrow for the loſs of their children that were carried into captivity, ſhould have that ſorrow turned into joy upon their return, *ver.* 15, 16, 17. Here we have,

(1.) The ſad lamentation which the mothers made for the loſs of their children, *ver.* 15. *In Ramah was there a voice heard*, at the time when the general captivity was, nothing but *lamentation, and bitter weeping*, more there than in other places, becauſe there Nebuzaradan had the general rendezvouz of his captives, as appears, *chap.* xl. 1. where we find him ſending Jeremiah back from Ramah. *Rachel* is there ſaid to *weep for her children.* The ſepulchre of Rachel was between Ramah and Bethlehem: Benjamin one of the two tribes, and Ephraim head of the ten tribes, were both deſcendants from Rachel. She had but two ſons, the elder of which was one for whom his father grieved, and *refuſed to be comforted*, Gen. xxxvii. 35. the other ſhe her ſelf called Benoni, *the ſon of my ſorrow.* Now the inhabitants of Ramah did in like manner *grieve for their ſons and their daughters* that were carried away, as, 1 *Sam.* xxx. 6. and ſuch a voice of lamentation was there, as, to ſpeak poetically, might even have raiſed Rachel out of her grave to mourn with them. The tender parents even *refuſed to be comforted for their children, becauſe they were not*, were not with them, but were in the hands of their enemies, they were never likely to ſee them more. This is applied by the evangeliſts to the great mourning that was at Bethlehem for the murder of the infants there by Herod, *Matt.* ii. 17, 18. and this ſcripture is ſaid to be then fulfilled. They wept for them, *and would not be comforted*, ſuppoſing the caſe would not admit any ground of comfort, *becauſe they were not.* Note, Sorrow for the loſs of children cannot but be great ſorrow, eſpecially if we ſo far miſtake as to think *they are not.*

(2.) Seaſonable comfort adminiſtred to them in reference hereunto, *ver.* 16, 17. They are adviſed to moderate that ſorrow, and to ſet bounds to it; *Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thy eyes from tears.* We are not forbidden to mourn in ſuch a caſe, allowances are made for natural affection, but we muſt not ſuffer our ſorrow to run into an extream, to hinder our joy in God, or take us off from our duty to him; though we mourn, we muſt not murmur, nor muſt we reſolve, as Jacob did, to go to the grave mourning; and to repreſs inordinate grief, we muſt conſider, that *there is hope in our end*, hope that there will be an end, the trouble will not laſt always, that it will be a happy end, the end will be peace. Note, It ought to ſupport us under our troubles, that we have reaſon to hope they will end well: *The righteous has hope in his death*, that that will be the bleſſed period of his griefs, and the bleſſed paſſage to his joys. *There is hope for thy poſterity*, ſo ſome read it; though thou mayſt not live to ſee theſe glorious days thy ſelf, there is hopes that thy poſterity ſhall: Though one generation falls in the wilderneſs, the next ſhall enter Canaan. Two things thou mayſt comfort thy ſelf with the hope of, 1. The reward of thy work; *thy* ſuffering *work ſhall be rewarded:* The comforts of the deliverance ſhall be ſufficient to balance all the grievances of the captivity. God makes his people *glad according to the days wherein he has afflicted them*, and ſo there is a proportion between the joys and the ſorrows, as between the reward and the work. The *glory to be revealed*, which the ſaints *hope for in their end*, will abundantly countervail *the ſufferings of this preſent time*, Rom. viii. 18. 2. The reſtoration of thy children. *They ſhall come again from the land of the enemy*, ver. 16. they *ſhall come again to their own border*, ver. 17. *There is hope* that children at a diſtance

distance may be brought home; Jacob had a comfortable meeting with Joseph, after he had despaired of ever seeing him. There is hope concerning children removed by death, that they shall *return to their own border*, to the happy lot assigned them in the resurrection, a lot in the heavenly Canaan, that border of his sanctuary. We shall see reason to repress our grief for the death of our children that are taken into covenant with God, when we consider the hopes we have of their resurrection to eternal life. They are not lost, but gone before.

18. ¶ I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself *thus*, Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed *to the yoke*: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou *art* the LORD my God. 19. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon *my* thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth. 20. *Is* Ephraim my dear son? *is he* a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the LORD. 21. Set thee up waymarks, make thee high heaps: set thine heart toward the high-way, *even* the way *which* thou wentest: turn again, O virgin of Israel, turn again to these thy cities. 22. ¶ How long wilt thou go about, O thou backsliding daughter? for the LORD hath created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall compass a man. 23. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; As yet they shall use this speech in the land of Judah and in the cities thereof, when I shall bring again their captivity; The LORD bless thee, O habitation of justice, *and* mountain of holiness. 24. And there shall dwell in Judah itself, and in all the cities thereof together, husbandmen, and they *that* go forth with flocks. 25. For I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul. 26. Upon this I awaked, and beheld; and my sleep was sweet unto me.

We have here,

1. Ephraim's repentance and return to God. Not only Judah but Ephraim, the ten tribes, shall be restored, and therefore shall thus be prepared and qualified for it, *Hos.* xiv. 8. *Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with Idols?* Ephraim the people is here spoken of as a single person, to denote their unanimity; they shall be as one man in their repentance, and shall glorify God in it with one mind and one mouth, one and all. It is likewise thus expressed, that it might be the better accommodated to particular penitents, for whose direction and encouragement this passage is intended. Ephraim is here brought in weeping for sin, perhaps because Ephraim, the person from whom that tribe had its denomination, was a man of a tender spirit; *mourned for his children many days*, 1 Chron. vii. 21, 22. and sorrow for sin is compared to that *for an only son*. This penitent is here brought in, (1.) Bemoaning himself, and the miseries of his present case. True penitents do thus bemoan themselves. (2.) Accusing himself, laying load upon himself as a sinner, a great sinner. He chargeth upon himself in the first place that sin, which his conscience told him he was more especially guilty of at this time; and that was, impatience under correction. *Thou hast chastised me*; I have been under the rod, and I needed it; I deserved it; I was justly chastised, chastised *as a bullock* who had never felt the goad, if he had not first rebelled against the yoke. True penitents look upon their afflictions as fatherly chastisements. *Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised*, i. e. it was well I was chastised, otherwise I had been undone; it did me good, or, at least, was intended to do me good; and yet I have been impatient under it: or, it may speak his unaffectedness under the affliction, *Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised*, that was all, not I was awakened by it, and quickned by it: I looked no farther than the chastisement. *I have been* under the chastisement *as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke*, unruly and unmanageable, *kicking against the pricks, like a wild bull in a net*, Isa. li. 20. This is the sin he finds himself guilty of now, but *ver.* 19. he reflects upon his former sins, and looks as far back as the days of his youth. The discovery of one sin should put us upon searching out more; now he remembers *the reproach of his youth*. Ephraim, as a people, reflects upon the miscarriages of their ancestors, when they were first formed into a people. It is applicable to particular persons. Note, The sin of our youth was the reproach of our youth, and we ought often to remember it against ourselves, and to bear it in a penitential sorrow and shame. 3. He is here brought in angry at himself, having a holy indignation at himself for his sin and folly; *he smote upon his thigh*, as the *publican upon his breast*; he was even amazed at himself, and at his own stupidity and frowardness, *he was ashamed, yea, even confounded*, could not with any confidence look up to God, nor with any comfort reflect upon himself. 4. He is here recommending himself to the mercy and grace of God. He finds he is bent to backslide from God, and cannot by any power of his own keep himself close with God, much less, when he is revolted, bring himself back to God, and therefore he prays, *Turn thou me, and I shall be turned*; which implies, that unless God do turn him by his grace he shall never be turned, but wander endlessly; that therefore he is very desirous of converting grace, has a dependence upon it, and doubts not but that that grace will be sufficient for him, to help him over all the difficulties that were in the way of his return to God. See *chap.* xvii. 14. *Heal me, and I shall be healed*. God works with power, can make the unwilling willing; if he undertake the conversion of a soul it will be converted. 5. He is here pleasing himself with the experience he had had of the blessed effect of divine grace, *Surely after that I was turned, I repented*. Note, All the pious workings of our hearts towards God, are the fruit and consequence of the powerful working of his grace in us. And observe, *He was turned*, he was instructed, his will was bowed to the will of God, by the right informing of his judgment concerning the truths of God. Note, The way God takes of converting souls to himself, is by opening the eyes of their understandings, and all good follows thereupon: *After that I was instructed*, I yielded, *I smote upon my thigh*. When sinners come to a right knowledge, they will come to a right way. Ephraim was chastised, and that did not produce the desired effect, it went no further; *I was chastised*, and that was all: But when the instructions of God's Spirit accompanied the corrections of his providence, then the work was done, then he *smote upon his thigh*, was so humbled for sin as to have no more to do with it.

2. God's compassion on Ephraim, and the kind reception he finds with God, *ver.* 20. (1.) He owns him for a child, though he has been an undutiful child and a prodigal: *Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child?* Thus when Ephraim bemoans himself, God bemoans him, as *one whom his mother comforts*, though she had chidden him, *Isa.* lxvi. 13. *Is* this *Ephraim my dear son? Is* this that *pleasant child?* Is it he that is thus sad in spirit, and that complains so bitterly? So it is like that of Saul, 1 *Sam.* xxvi. 17. *Is this thy voice, my son David?* Or, as it is sometimes supplied, *Is not Ephraim my dear son? Is he not a pleasant child?* Yes, now he is, now he repents and returns. Note, Those that have been undutiful backsliding children, if they sincerely return and repent, however they have been under the chastisement of the rod, shall be accepted of God as *dear* and *pleasant children*. Ephraim had afflicted himself, but God thus heals him; had abased himself, but God thus honours him; as the returning prodigal who thought himself no more worthy to be *called a son*, yet, by his father, had the *best robe* put upon him, and *a ring on his hand*. (2.) He relents towards him, and speaks of him with a great deal of tender compassion; *Since I spake against him*, by the threatnings of the word, and the rebukes of providence, *I do earnestly remember him still*, my thoughts towards him are thoughts of peace. Note, When God afflicts his people, yet he doth not forget them; when he casts them out of their land, yet he doth not cast them out of sight, nor out of mind. Even then when God is speaking against us, yet he is acting for us, and designing our good in all; and this is our comfort in our affliction, that *the Lord thinketh upon us*, though we have forgotten him. *I remember him still*, and therefore *my bowels are troubled for him*, as Joseph's yearned towards his brethren, even then when he *spake roughly* to them. When Israel's affliction extorted a penitent confession and submission, it is said his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel, *Judges* x. 16. for he always afflicts with the greatest tenderness. It was God's compassion that mitigated Ephraim's punishment; *My heart is turned within me*, Hos. xi. 8, 9. and now the same compassion accepted Ephraim's repentance. Ephraim had pleaded, *ver.* 18. *Thou art the Lord my God*, therefore to thee will I return, therefore on thy mercy and grace I will depend; and God shews it was a valid plea, and prevailing, for he makes it appear both that he is God and not man, and that he is his God. (3.) He resolves to do him good; *I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord*. Note, God hath mercy in store, rich mercy, sure mercy, suitable mercy, for all that in sincerity seek him, and submit to him. And the more we are afflicted for sin, the better prepared we are for the comforts of that mercy.

3. Gracious excitements and encouragements given to the people of God in Babylon, to prepare for their return to their own land. Let them not tremble, and lose their spirits; let them not trifle, and lose their time; but with a firm resolution, and a close application, address themselves to their journey, *ver.* 21, 22. (1.) They must think of nothing but of coming back to their own country, out of which they had been driven, *Turn again, O virgin of Israel*, a virgin to be again espoused to thy God, *turn again to these thy cities*; though they are laid waste, and in ruins, they are *thy cities*, which thy God gave thee, and therefore *turn again* to them. They must be content in Babylon no longer, than till they had liberty to return to Zion. (2.) They must return the same way that they went, that the remembrance of the sorrows that attended them, or which their fathers had told them of, in such and such places upon the road, the sight of which would, by a local me-

memory, put them in mind of them, might make them the more thankful for their deliverance. Thoſe that have departed from God into the bondage of ſin, muſt return by the ſame way in which they went aſtray, to the ſame duties they neglected, muſt *do their firſt works*. (3.) They muſt engage themſelves, and all that is within them, in this affair. *Set thy heart towards the high-way*; bring thy mind to it; conſider thy duty, thine intereſt, and go about it with a good will. Note, The way from Babylon to Zion, from the bondage of ſin to the glorious liberty of God's children, is a high-way; it is right, it is plain, it is ſafe, it is well tracked, *Iſa.* xxxv. 8. yet none are likely to walk in it, unleſs they *ſet their hearts toward it*. (4.) They muſt furniſh themſelves with all needful accommodations for the journey, *Set thee up way-marks*, and *make thee high heaps*, or *pillars*; ſend before to have ſuch ſet up in all places where is any danger of miſſing the road. Let thoſe that go firſt, and are beſt acquainted with the way, ſet up ſuch directions for thoſe that follow. (5.) They muſt compoſe themſelves for their journey, *How long wilt thou go about, O backſliding daughter?* Let not their minds fluctuate, or be uncertain about it, but reſolve upon it; let them not put themſelves into a toſs with care and fear, let them not ſeek about to creatures for aſſiſtance, nor hurry here and there in courting them, which had often been an inſtance of their *backſliding* from God; but let them caſt themſelves upon God, and then let their minds be fixed. (6.) They are encouraged to do this, by an aſſurance God gives them, that he would *create a new thing*, ſtrange and ſurpriſing, *in the earth*, in that land, *a woman ſhall compaſs a man*. The church of God, that is weak and feeble as a woman, altogether unapt for military employments, and of a timorous ſpirit, yet ſhall *ſurround*, *beſiege*, and *prevail* againſt *a mighty man*, Iſa. liv. 6. The church is compared to a woman, *Rev.* xii. 1. And whereas we find *armies compaſſing the camp of the ſaints*, Rev. xx. 9. now the camp of the ſaints ſhall compaſs them. Many good interpreters underſtand this *new thing* created in that land, to be the incarnation of Chriſt, which God had an eye to in bringing them back to that land, and which had ſometimes been given them for a ſign, *Iſa.* vii. 14. and ix. 6. *A woman*, the virgin Mary, incloſed in her womb *the mighty one*, for ſo Geber, the word here uſed, ſignifies; and God is called Gibbor, the *mighty God*, Jer. xxxii. 18. and ſo is Chriſt there where his incarnation is ſpoken of, as it is ſuppoſed to be here, *Iſa.* ix. 6. He is El-Gibbor, the *mighty God*. Let this aſſure them, that God would not caſt off this people, for that bleſſing was to be among them, *Iſa.* lxv. 8.

4. A comfortable proſpect given them of a happy ſettlement in their own land again. (1.) They ſhall have an intereſt in the eſteem and good will of all their neighbours, who will give them a good word, and put up a good prayer for them, *ver.* 23. *As yet*, or rather, *yet again* (though Judah and Jeruſalem have long been an aſtoniſhment and an hiſſing) *this ſpeech ſhall be uſed*, as it was formerly, *concerning the land of Judah, and the cities thereof, The Lord bleſs thee, O habitation of juſtice, and mountain of holineſs*. This intimates, that they ſhall return much reformed, and every way better; and this reformation ſhall be ſo conſpicuous, that all about them ſhall take notice of it. The *cities*, that uſed to be neſts of pirates, ſhall be *habitations of juſtice*, the *mountain of Iſrael* (ſo the whole land is called, *Pſal.* lxxviii. 54.) and eſpecially mount Zion, ſhall be a *mountain of holineſs*. Obſerve, Juſtice towards men, and holineſs towards God, muſt go together. Godlineſs and honeſty are what God has joined, and let no man think to put them aſunder, or to make one to atone for the want of the other. It is well with a people, when they come out of trouble thus refined, and it is a ſure preſage of further happineſs. And we may with great comfort pray for the bleſſing of God upon thoſe houſes that are *habitations of juſtice*, thoſe cities and countries that are *mountains of holineſs*. There the Lord will undoubtedly *command the bleſſing*. (2.) There ſhall be great plenty of all good things among them, *ver*, 24, 25. *There ſhall dwell in Judah itſelf*, even in it, though it has now long lain waſte, both *husbandmen* and *ſhepherds*, the two ancient and honourable employments of Cain and Abel, *Gen.* iv. 2. It is comfortable dwelling in a *habitation of juſtice*, and a *mountain of holineſs*. And the husbandmen and ſhepherds ſhall eat of the fruit of their labours, for I have *ſatiated the weary and ſorrowful ſoul*, i. e. they that came weary from their journey, and have been long ſorrowful in their captivity, ſhall now enjoy great plenty. This is applicable to the ſpiritual bleſſings God has in ſtore for all true penitents, for all that are juſt and holy; they ſhall be abundantly ſatisfied with divine graces and comforts: In the love and favour of God the weary ſoul ſhall find reſt, and the ſorrowful ſoul joy.

Laſtly, The prophet tells us, what pleaſure the diſcovery of this brought to his mind, *ver.* 26. The foreſights God had given him ſometimes of the calamities of Judah and Jeruſalem, were an exceeding pain to him, as *chap.* iv. 19. but theſe views were pleaſing ones, though at a diſtance. *Upon this I awaked*, overcome with joy, which burſt the fetters of ſleep; and I reflected upon my dream, and it was ſuch as had made *my ſleep ſweet to me*; I was refreſhed, as men uſe to be with quiet ſleep. Thoſe may ſleep ſweetly that lie down and riſe up in the favour of God, and in communion with him: Nor is any proſpect in this world more pleaſing to good men and good miniſters, than that of the flouriſhing ſtate of the church of God. What can we ſee with more ſatisfaction, than *the good of Jeruſalem all the days of our life, and peace upon Iſrael?*

27. ¶ Behold, the days come, ſaith the LORD, that I will ſow the houſe of Iſrael, and the houſe of Judah with the ſeed of man, and with the ſeed of beaſt. 28. And it ſhall come to paſs, *that* like as I have watched over them, to pluck up, and to break down, and to throw down, and to deſtroy, and to afflict; ſo will I watch over them, to build and to plant, ſaith the LORD. 29. In thoſe days they ſhall ſay no more, The fathers have eaten a ſour grape, and the childrens teeth are ſet on edge. 30. But every one ſhall die for his own iniquity, every man that eateth the ſour grape, his teeth ſhall be ſet on edge. 31. ¶ Behold, the days come, ſaith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the houſe of Iſrael, and with the houſe of Judah: 32. Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand, to bring them out of the land of Egypt (which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, ſaith the LORD:) 33. But this *ſhall be* the covenant that I will make with the houſe of Iſrael, After thoſe days, ſaith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they ſhall be my people. 34. And they ſhall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, ſaying, Know ye the LORD: for they ſhall all know me, from the leaſt of them unto the greateſt of them, ſaith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their ſin no more.

The prophet having found his *ſleep ſweet*, made ſo by the revelations of divine grace, ſets himſelf to ſleep again, in hopes of further diſcoveries, and is not diſappointed; for it is here further promiſed,

1. That the people of God ſhall become both numerous and proſperous: Both Iſrael and Judah ſhall be repleniſhed both with men and cattle, as if they were ſown *with the ſeed* of both, *ver.* 27. They ſhall increaſe and multiply like a field ſown with corn; and this is the product of God's bleſſing, *ver.* 23. for whom God bleſſed, to them he ſaid, *Be fruitful*. This ſhould be a type of the wonderful increaſe of the goſpel church: God will *build* them, and *plant* them, *ver.* 28. He *will watch over them* to do them good, *i. e.* no opportunity ſhall be loſt, that may further their proſperity. Every thing for a long time had turned ſo much againſt them, and all occurrences did ſo conſpire to ruin them, that it ſeemed as if God had *watched over them, to pluck up, and to throw down*; but now every thing that falls out ſhall happily fall in to ſtrengthen and advance their intereſts. God will be as ready to comfort thoſe that repent of their ſins, and are humbled for them, as he is to puniſh thoſe that continue in love with their ſins, and are hardned in them.

2. That they ſhall be reckoned with no further for the ſins of their fathers, *ver.* 29, 30. *They ſhall ſay no more*, i. e. they ſhall have no more occaſion to ſay, that *God viſits the iniquity of the parents upon the children*, which God had done in the captivity; for the ſins of their anceſtors came into the account againſt them, particularly thoſe of Manaſſeh; this they had complained of as a hardſhip: Other ſcriptures juſtify God in this method of proceeding, and our Saviour tells the wicked Jews in his days, that they ſhould ſmart for their fathers ſins, becauſe they perſiſted in them, *Matt.* xxiii. 35, 36. But it is here promiſed, that this ſevere diſpenſation with them ſhould now be brought to an end; that God would proceed no further in his controverſy with them for their fathers ſins, but remember for them his covenant with their fathers, and do them good according to that covenant: *They ſhall no more* complain, as they have done, that *the fathers have eaten ſour grapes, and the childrens teeth are ſet on edge*; which ſpeaks ſomething of an abſurdity, and is an invidious reflection upon God's proceedings, but *every one ſhall die for his own iniquity* ſtill; though God will ceaſe to puniſh them in their national capacity, yet he will ſtill reckon with particular perſons that provoke him. Note, Publick ſalvations will give no impunity, no ſecurity, to private ſinners; ſtill *every man that eats the ſour grapes, his teeth ſhall be ſet on edge*. Note, Thoſe that eat forbidden fruit, how temptingly ſoever it looks, will find it a *ſour grape*, and it will *ſet their teeth on edge*, ſooner or later they will feel from it, and reflect upon it with bitterneſs. There is as direct a tendency in ſin to make a man uneaſy, as there is in ſour grapes to ſet the teeth on edge.

3. That God will renew his covenant with them, ſo that all theſe bleſſings they ſhall have, not by providence only, but by promiſe, and thereby they ſhall be both ſweetned and ſecured. But this covenant refers to goſpel times, the latter days that *ſhall come*, for

for of gospel grace the apostle understands it, *Heb.* viii. 8, 9, &c. where this whole passage is quoted, as a summary of the covenant of grace made with believers in Jesus Christ. Observe,

(1.) Who the persons are with whom this covenant is made, *with the house of Israel and Judah*, i. e. with the gospel church, *the Israel of God*, on which *peace shall be*, Gal. vi. 16. with the spiritual seed of believing Abraham, and praying Jacob. Judah and Israel had been two separate kingdoms, but were united after their return, in the joint favours God bestowed upon them, so Jews and Gentiles in the gospel church and covenant.

(2.) What is the nature of this covenant in general, it is a *new covenant*, and *not according to the covenant made with them, when they came out of Egypt*; not as if that made with them at mount Sinai were a covenant of nature and innocency, such as was made with Adam in the day he was created: No; that was for substance a covenant of grace, but it was a dark dispensation of that covenant, in comparison with this in gospel times. Sinners were saved by that covenant upon their repentance, and faith in a Messiah to come, whose blood confirming that covenant, was typified by that of the legal sacrifices, *Exod.* xxiv. 7, 8. yet this may upon many accounts be called new in comparison with that; the ordinances and promises are more spiritual and heavenly, and the discoveries much more clear. That covenant God made with them when he *took them by the hand*, as if they had been blind or lame, or weak, to lead them out of the land of Egypt, *which covenant they brake.* Observe, it was God that made this covenant, but it was the people that brake it, for our salvation is of God, but our sin and ruin is of our selves. It was an aggravation of their breach of it, that God *was a husband to them*, that he had espoused them to himself, it was a marriage covenant that was between him and them, which they broke by idolatry, that spiritual adultery. It is a great aggravation of our treacherous departures from God, that he has been a husband to us, a loving, tender, careful husband, faithful to us, and yet we false to him.

(3.) What are the particular articles of this covenant; they all contain spiritual blessings, not, I will give them the land of Canaan, and a numerous issue, but I will give them pardon, and peace, and grace, good heads, and good hearts. He promiseth,

1. That he will incline them to their duty: *I will put my law in their inward part, and write it in their heart:* Not, I will give them a new law (as Mr. Gataker well observes) for Christ *came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it*; but the law shall be written in their hearts by the finger of the Spirit, as formerly it was written in the tables of stone. God writes his law in the hearts of all believers, makes it ready and familiar to them, at hand when they have occasion to use it, as that which is *written in the heart*, Prov. iii. 3. He makes them in care to observe it, for that which we are sollicitous about, is said to lie near our hearts. He works in them a disposition to obedience, a conformity of thought and affection to the rules of the divine law, as that of the copy to the original. This is here promised, and ought to be prayed for, that our duty may be done conscientiously and with delight.

2. That he will take them into relation to himself: *I will be their God*, a God all-sufficient to them, *and they shall be my people*, a loyal obedient people to me. God's being to us a God is the summary of all happiness, heaven it self is no more, *Heb.* xi. 16. *Rev.* xxi. 3. Our being to him a people, may be taken either as the condition on our part; those and those only shall have God to be to them a God, that are truly willing to engage themselves to be to him a people, or, as a farther branch of the promise, that God will by his grace make us his people, a *willing people, in the day of his power*; and whoever are his people, it is his grace that makes them so.

3. That there shall be an abundance of the knowledge of God among all sorts of people, and this will have an influence upon all good, for they that rightly know God's name will seek him, and serve him, and put their trust in him, *ver.* 34. *All shall know me*; all shall be welcome to the knowledge of God, and shall have the means of that knowledge; *his way shall be known upon earth*, whereas, for many ages, *in Judah only was God known.* Many more shall know God than did in the Old Testament times, which among the Gentiles were times of ignorance, the true God being to them an unknown God. The things of God shall in gospel times be made more plain, and intelligible, and level to the capacities of the meanest than they had been, while Moses had a *vail upon his face.* There shall be such a general knowledge of God, that there shall not be so much need as had formerly been of teaching. Some take it as an hyperbolical expression (and the dulness of the Jews needed such expressions to awaken them) designed only to shew, that the knowledge of God in gospel times, should vastly exceed that knowledge of him, which they had under the law: Or, perhaps, it intimates, that in gospel times there shall be such great plenty of publick preaching, statedly and constantly, by men authorized and appointed to *preach the word, in season, and out of season*, much beyond what was under the law; that there shall be less need than there was then of fraternal teaching, by a neighbour and a brother. The priests preached but now and then, and in the temple, to a few in comparison, but now *all shall* or may *know* God, by frequenting the assemblies of christians, wherein, through all parts of the church, the good knowledge of God shall be taught. Some give this sense of it (Mr. Gataker mentions it) that many shall have such clearness of understanding in the things of God, that they may seem rather to have been taught by some immediate irradiation, than by any means of instruction. In short, the things of God shall, by the gospel of Christ, be brought to a clearer light than ever, 2 *Tim.* i. 10. and the people of God shall, by the grace of Christ, be brought to a clearer sight of those things than ever, *Eph.* i. 17, 18.

4. That in order to all these blessings sin shall be pardoned; this is made the reason of all the rest; *for I will forgive their iniquity*, will not impute that to them, nor deal with them according to the desert of that, *will forgive* and forget, *I will remember their sin no more.* It is sin that keeps good things from us, that stops the current of God's favours; let sin be taken away by pardoning mercy, and the obstruction is removed, and divine grace runs down like a river, like a mighty stream.

35. ¶ Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, *and* the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; the LORD of hosts *is* his name. 36. If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, *then* the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever. 37. Thus saith the LORD, If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth be searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel, for all that they have done, saith the LORD. 38. ¶ Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the city shall be built to the LORD from the tower of Hananeel unto the gate of the corner. 39. And the measuring-line shall yet go forth over against it, upon the hill Gareb, and shall compass about to Goath. 40. And the whole valley of the dead bodies, and of the ashes, and all the fields unto the brook of Kidron, unto the corner of the horse-gate, towards the east, *shall be* holy unto the LORD, it shall not be plucked up, nor thrown down any more for ever.

Glorious things have been spoken in the foregoing verses concerning the gospel church, which that epocha of the Jewish church, that was to commence at the return from captivity, would at length terminate in, and which all those promises were to have their full accomplishments in. But may we depend upon these promises? Yes, we have here a ratification of them, and the utmost assurance imaginable given of the perpetuity of the blessings contained in them. The great thing here secured to us is, that while the world stands God will have a church in it, which, though sometimes it may be brought very low, yet shall be raised again, and its interests re-established; it is *built upon a rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.* Now here are two things offered, for the confirmation of our faith in this matter; the building of the world, and the rebuilding of Jerusalem.

1. The building of the world, and the firmness and lastingness of that building, is an evidence of the power and faithfulness of that God, who has undertaken the establishment of his church. *He that built all things* at first *is God*, Heb. iii. 4. and the same is he that makes all things now. The constancy of the glories of the kingdom of nature may encourage us to depend upon the divine promise for the continuance of the glories of the kingdom of grace, for *this is as the waters of Noah*, Isa. liv. 9. Let us observe here,

(1.) The glories of the kingdom of nature, and infer from thence how happy they are that have this God, the God of nature, to be their God for ever and ever. Take notice, 1. Of the steady and regular motion of the heavenly bodies, which God is the first mover, and supreme director of. *He giveth the sun for a light by day*, ver. 35. not only made it at first to be so, but still gives it to be so, for the light and heat, and all the influences of the sun, continually depend upon its great Creator. He gives *the ordinances of the moon and stars for a light by night*, their motions are called *ordinances*, both because they are regular, and by rule, and because they are determined and under rule: See *Job* xxxviii. 31, 32, 33. 2. Take notice of the government of the sea, and the check that is given to its proud billows; *the Lord of hosts divideth the sea*, or, as some read it, *settles the sea, when the waves thereof roar, (divide & impera)* when it is most tossed, God keeps it within compass, *Jer.* v. 22. and soon quiets it, and makes it calm again. The power of God is to be magnified by us, not only in maintaining the regular motions of the heavens, but in controlling the irregular motions of the seas. 3. Take notice of the vastness of the heavens, and the unmeasurable extent of the firmament; he must needs be a great God who manageth such a great world as this is; the *heavens above cannot be measured*, ver. 37. and yet God fills them. 4. Take notice of the mysteriousness even of that part of the creation in which our lot is cast, and which we most are conversant with. *The foundations of the earth cannot be searched out beneath*, for the Creator *hangeth the earth upon nothing*, Job xxvi.

xxvi. 7. and we *know not how the foundations thereof are faſtened*, Job xxxviii. 6. 5. Take notice of the immoveable ſtedfaſtneſs of all theſe, *ver.* 36. *Theſe ordinances cannot depart from before God*; he hath all the hoſts of heaven and earth continually under his eye, and all the motions of both; he has eſtabliſhed them and they abide, *abide according to his ordinance, for all are his ſervants*, Pſal. cxix. 90, 91. The heavens are often clouded, and the ſun and moon often eclipſed, the earth may quake, and the ſea be toſſed, but they all keep their place, are moved, but not removed: Herein we muſt acknowledge the power and goodneſs, and faithfulneſs of the Creator.

(2.) The ſecurities of the kingdom of grace inferred from hence; we may be confident of this very thing, that *the ſeed of Iſrael ſhall not ceaſe from being a nation*, for the ſpiritual Iſrael, the goſpel church, ſhall be *a holy nation, a peculiar people*, 1 Pet. ii. 9. When Iſrael according to the fleſh is no longer a nation, the *children of the promiſe are counted for the ſeed*, Rom. ix. 8. and God *will not caſt off all the ſeed of Iſrael*, no, not *for all that they have done*, though they have done very wickedly, *ver.* 37. He juſtly might caſt them off, but he *will not*. Though he caſt them out from their land, and caſt them down for a time, yet he will not caſt them off. Some of them he caſts off, but not all; to this the apoſtle ſeems to refer, *Rom.* xi. 5. *Hath God caſt away his people? God forbid* that we ſhould think ſo! for, *ver.* 5. *At this time there is a remnant*, enow to ſave the credit of the promiſe, that God *will not caſt off all the ſeed of Iſrael*, though many among them throw away themſelves by unbelief. Now we may be aſſiſted in the belief of this, by conſidering, 1. That the God that has undertaken the preſervation of the church, is a God of almighty power, that *upholds all things by his* almighty *word. Our help ſtands in his name, who made heaven and earth*, and therefore can do any thing. 2. That God would not take all this care of the world, but that he deſigns to have ſome glory to himſelf out of it, and how ſhall he have it but by ſecuring to himſelf a church in it, a people that *ſhall be to him for a name and a praiſe?* 3. That if the order of the creation therefore continues firm, becauſe it was well fixed at firſt, and is not altered becauſe it needs no alteration, the method of grace ſhall for the ſame reaſon continue invariable, as it was at firſt well ſettled. 4. That he who hath promiſed to preſerve a church for himſelf, has approved himſelf faithful to the word which he has ſpoken, concerning the ſtability of the world. He that is true to his covenant with Noah and his ſons, becauſe he eſtabliſhed it for an *everlaſting covenant*, Gen. ix. 9, 16. we may be ſure will not be falſe to his covenant with Abraham and his ſeed, his ſpiritual ſeed, for that alſo is an *everlaſting covenant:* Even that which they have done, though they have done much amiſs, ſhall not prevail to defeat the gracious intentions of the covenant. See *Pſalm* lxxxix. 30, *&c.*

2. The rebuilding of Jeruſalem which was now in ruins, and the enlargement and eſtabliſhment of that, ſhall be an earneſt of theſe great things that God will do for the goſpel church, the *heavenly Jeruſalem*, ver. 30, 31, 32. *The days will come*, though they may be long in coming, (1.) When Jeruſalem ſhall be entirely built again, as large as ever it was, the dimenſions are here exactly deſcribed, by the places through which the circumference paſſed; and, no doubt, the wall which Nehemiah built, and which, the more punctually to fulfil the prophecy, began about the *tower of Hananeel*, here mentioned, *Neh.* iii. 1. incloſed as much ground as is here intended, though we cannot certainly determine the places here called by *the gate of the corner, the hill Gareb*, &c. (2.) When, being built, it ſhall be conſecrated to God and to his ſervice: It *ſhall be built to the Lord*, ver. 38. and even the ſuburbs and fields adjacent *ſhall be holy unto the Lord.* It ſhall not be polluted with idols, as formerly, but God ſhall be praiſed and honoured there; the whole city ſhall be as it were one temple, one holy place, as the new Jeruſalem is, which therefore has no temple, becauſe it is all temple. (3.) Being thus built by virtue of the promiſe of God, and then devoted to the praiſe of God, *it ſhall not be plucked up, or thrown down any more for ever*, i. e. it ſhall continue very long; the time of the new city from the return to its laſt deſtruction, being full as long as that of the old from David to the captivity. But this promiſe was to have its full accompliſhment in the goſpel church, which, as it is the ſpiritual Iſrael, and therefore God will not caſt it off, ſo it is the holy city, and therefore all the powers of men *ſhall not pluck it up, or throw it down:* It may lie waſte for a time, as Jeruſalem did, but ſhall recover itſelf, ſhall weather the ſtorm, and gain its point, *and the gates of hell ſhall not prevail againſt it.*

CHAP. XXXII.

In this chapter we have, 1. *Jeremiah impriſoned for foretelling the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, and the captivity of king Zedekiah*, ver. 1,—5. 2. *We have him buying land, by divine appointment, as an aſſurance that in due time a happy end ſhould be put to the preſent troubles*, ver. 6,—15. 3. *We have his prayer, which he offered up to God upon that occaſion*, ver. 16,—25. 4. *We have a meſſage which God thereupon intruſted him to deliver to the people.* (1.) *He muſt foretel the utter deſtruction of Judah and Jeruſalem for their ſins*, ver. 26,—35. *But*, (2.) *At the ſame time he muſt aſſure them, that, though the deſtruction was total, it ſhould not be final; but at length their poſterity ſhould recover the peaceable poſſeſſion of their own land*, ver. 36,—44. *The predictions of this chapter, both threatnings and promiſes, are much the ſame with what we have already met with, again and again, but here are ſome circumſtances that are very particular and remarkable.*

1. THE word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD in the tenth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, which *was* the eighteenth year of Nebuchadrezzar. 2. For then the king of Babylons army beſieged Jeruſalem: and Jeremiah the prophet was ſhut up in the court of the priſon, which *was* in the king of Judahs houſe. 3. For Zedekiah king of Judah had ſhut him up, ſaying, Wherefore doſt thou propheſy, and ſay, Thus ſaith the LORD, Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he ſhall take it, 4. And Zedekiah king of Judah ſhall not eſcape out of the hand of the Chaldeans, but ſhall ſurely be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon, and ſhall ſpeak with him mouth to mouth, and his eyes ſhall behold his eyes, 5. And he ſhall lead Zedekiah to Babylon, and there ſhall he be until I viſit him, ſaith the LORD: though ye fight with the Chaldeans, ye ſhall not proſper. 6. ¶ And Jeremiah ſaid, The word of the LORD came unto me, ſaying, 7. Behold, Hanameel the ſon of Shallum thine uncle, ſhall come unto thee, ſaying, Buy thee my field that *is* in Anathoth: for the right of redemption *is* thine to buy *it*. 8. So Hanameel mine uncles ſon came to me in the court of the priſon, according to the word of the LORD, and ſaid unto me, Buy my field, I pray thee, that *is* in Anathoth, which *is* in the country of Benjamin: for the right of inheritance *is* thine, and the redemption *is* thine, buy *it* for thy ſelf: then I knew that this *was* the word of the LORD. 9. And I bought the field of Hanameel my uncles ſon, that *was* in Anathoth, and weighed him the money, *even* ſeventeen ſhekels of ſilver. 10. And I ſubſcribed the evidence, and ſealed *it*, and took witneſſes, and weighed *him* the money in the balances. 11. So I took the evidence of the purchaſe, *both that which was* ſealed *according* to the law and cuſtom, and *that which was* open. 12. And I gave the evidence of the purchaſe unto Baruch the ſon of Neriah, the ſon of Maaſeiah, in the ſight of Hanameel my uncles *ſon*, and in the preſence of the witneſſes that ſubſcribed the book of the purchaſe, before all the Jews that ſat in the court of the priſon. 13. ¶ And I charged Baruch before them, ſaying, 14. Thus ſaith the LORD of hoſts the God of Iſrael, Take theſe evidences, this evidence of the purchaſe, both *which is* ſealed, and this evidence *which is* open, and put them in an earthen veſſel, that they may continue many days. 15. For thus ſaith the LORD of hoſts the God of Iſrael, Houſes and fields, and vineyards ſhall be poſſeſſed again in this land.

It appears by the date of this chapter, that we are now coming very nigh to that fatal year which compleated the deſolations of Judah and Jeruſalem, by the Chaldeans; God's judgments came gradually upon them, but they not meeting him by repentance in the way of his judgments, he proceeded in his controverſy till all was laid waſte, which was in the eleventh year of Zedekiah; now what is here recorded happened in the tenth. The king of Babylon's army had now inveſted Jeruſalem, and was carrying on the ſiege with vigour, not doubting, but in a little time to make themſelves maſters of it, while the beſieged had taken up a deſperate reſolution not to ſurrender, but to hold it out to the laſt extremity. Now,

1. Jeremiah propheſieth, that both the city and the court ſhall fall into the hands of the king of Babylon. He tells them expreſly, that the beſiegers ſhould take the city as prize, for God, whoſe city it was, in a peculiar manner will give it into their hands, and put it out of his protection, *ver.* 3. That though Zedekiah attempt to make his eſcape, he ſhall be overtaken, and ſhall be delivered a priſoner into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar; ſhall be brought into his preſence to his great confuſion and terror, he having made himſelf ſo obnoxious by breaking his faith with him; he ſhall hear the king of Babylon pronounce his doom, and ſee with what fury and indignation he will look upon him; *his eye ſhall behold his eyes*, ver. 4. That Zedekiah ſhall be carried to Babylon

bylon, and continue a miſerable captive there, *until God viſit him*, i. e. till God put an end to his life by a natural death, as Nebuchadnezzar had long before put an end to his days, by putting out his eyes. Note, Thoſe that live in miſery, may be truly ſaid to be viſited in mercy, when God by death takes them home to himſelf. And, laſtly, he foretels that all their attempts to force the beſiegers from their trenches ſhould be ineffectual. *Though ye fight with the Chaldeans, ye ſhall not proſper*; how ſhould they when God did not fight for them? *ver.* 5. See *chap.* xxxiv. 2, 3.

2. For propheſying thus he is impriſoned, not in the common goal, but in the more creditable priſon, that was within the verge of the palace, *in the king of Judah's houſe*, and there not cloſely confined, but in *cuſtodia libera*, in the *court of the priſon*, where he might have good company, good air, and good intelligence brought him, and would be ſheltered from the abuſes of the mob; but however, it was a priſon, and Zedekiah ſhut him up in it for propheſying as he did, *ver.* 2, 3. So far was he from *humbling himſelf before Jeremiah*, as he ought to have done, 2 *Chron.* xxxvi. 12. that he *hardened himſelf* againſt him. Though he had formerly ſo far owned him to be a prophet, as to deſire him to *enquire of the Lord for them*, chap. xxi. 2. yet now he chides him for propheſying, *ver.* 3. and ſhuts him up in priſon, perhaps, not with deſign to puniſh him any further, but only to reſtrain him from propheſying any further, which was crime bad enough. Silencing God's prophets, though it is not ſo ill as mocking and killing them, yet is a great affront to the God of heaven. See how wretchedly the hearts of ſinners are hardened by the deceitfulneſs of ſin. Perſecution was one of the ſins for which God was now contending with them, and yet Zedekiah perſiſts in it, even now he was in the depth of diſtreſs. No providences, no afflictions will of themſelves part between men and their ſins, unleſs the grace of God work with them. Nay, ſome are made worſe by thoſe very judgments that ſhould make them better.

3. Being in priſon, he purchaſeth a piece of ground from a near relation of his, that lay in Anathoth, *ver.* 6, 7, &c. One would not have expected, (1.) That a prophet ſhould concern himſelf ſo far in the buſineſs of this world; but why not? Though miniſters muſt not entangle themſelves, yet they may concern themſelves in the affairs of this life. (2.) That one who had neither wife nor children ſhould buy land, we find *chap.* xvi. 2. that he had no family of his own, yet he may purchaſe for his own uſe while he lives, and leave it to the children of his relations when he dies. (3.) One would little have thought that a priſoner ſhould be a purchaſer; how ſhould he get money before hand to buy land with? It is probable he lived frugally, and ſaved ſomething out of what belonged to him as a prieſt, which is no blemiſh at all to his character; but we have no reaſon to think that the people were kind, or that his being before hand was owing to their generoſity. Nay, (4.) It was moſt ſtrange of all that he ſhould buy a *piece of land*, when he himſelf knew that the whole land was now to be laid waſte, and fall into the hands of the Chaldeans, and then what good would this do him? But it was the will of God he ſhould buy it, and he ſubmitted, though the money ſeemed to be thrown away. His kinſman came to offer it him; it was not of his own ſeeking; he coveted not to lay houſe to houſe, and field to field, but providence brought it to him, and it is likely it was a good bargain; beſides, the *right of redemption* belonged to him, *ver.* 8. and if he refuſed, he did not do the kinſman's part. It is true he might lawfully refuſe, but being a prophet, in a thing of this nature, he muſt do that which would be for the honour of his profeſſion; *it became him to fulfil all righteouſneſs*. It was a land that lay within the ſuburbs of a prieſts city, and if he ſhould refuſe it, there was danger leſt in theſe times of diſorder, it might be ſold to one of another tribe, which was contrary to the law, to prevent which it was convenient for him to buy it. It would likewiſe be a kindneſs to his kinſman, who probably was at this time in a great want of money. Jeremiah had but a little, but what he had he was willing to lay it out in ſuch a manner, as might tend moſt to the honour of God, and the good of his friends and country, which he preferred before his own private intereſts. Obſerve,

1. How fairly the bargain was made. When Jeremiah knew by Hanameel's coming to him, as God had foretold he would, that *it was the word of the Lord*, that it was his mind he ſhould make this purchaſe, he made no more difficulty of it, but *bought the field*. And, (1.) He was very honeſt and exact in paying the money: He *weighed him the money*, did not preſs him to take it upon content, though he was his near kinſman, but weighed it to him, current money. It was *ſeventeen ſhekels of ſilver*, amounting to about forty ſhillings of our money. It is likely it was but a little field, and of ſmall yearly value, when the purchaſe was ſo low: beſides, the *right of inheritance* was in Jeremiah, ſo that he was only to buy out his kinſman's life, the reverſion was his already. Some think this was only the earneſt of a greater ſum; but we ſhall not wonder at the ſmallneſs of the price, if we conſider what ſcarcity there was of money at this time, and how little lands were counted upon. (2.) He was very prudent and diſcreet in preſerving the writings: They were ſubſcribed *before witneſſes*, one copy was *ſealed up*, the other was *open*. One was the original, the other the counter-part; or, perhaps, that which was *ſealed up*, was for his own private uſe, the other that was *open* was to be laid up in the publick regiſter of conveyances, for any perſon concerned to conſult. Due care and caution in things of this nature, might prevent a great deal of injuſtice and contention. The deeds of purchaſe were lodged in the hands of Baruch, before witneſſes, and he was ordered to lay them up in an *earthen veſſel* (an emblem of the nature of all the ſecurities this world can pretend to give us, brittle things and ſoon broken) that they might *continue many days*, for the uſe of Jeremiah's heirs, after the return out of captivity; for they might then have the benefit of this purchaſe. Purchaſing reverſions may be a kindneſs to thoſe that come after us, and a good man thus *lays up an inheritance for his children's children*.

2. What was the deſign of having this bargain made? It was to ſignify, that though Jeruſalem was now beſieged, and the whole country was likely to be laid waſte, yet the time ſhould come, when *houſes, and fields, and vineyards ſhould be again poſſeſſed in this land*, ver. 15. As God appointed Jeremiah to confirm his predictions of the approaching deſtruction of Jeruſalem, by his own practice in living unmarried, ſo he now appointed him to confirm his predictions of the future reſtoration of Jeruſalem, by his own practice in purchaſing this field. Note, It concerns miniſters to make it to appear in their whole converſation, that they do themſelves believe that which they preach to others; and that they may do ſo, and impreſs it the deeper upon their hearers, they muſt many a time deny themſelves, as Jeremiah did in both theſe inſtances. God having promiſed that this land ſhould again come into the poſſeſſion of his people, Jeremiah will, in behalf of his heirs, put in for a ſhare. Note, It is good to manage even our worldly affairs in faith, and to do common buſineſs with an eye to the providence and promiſe of God. Lucius Florus relates it, as a great inſtance of the bravery of the Roman citizens, that in the time of the ſecond Punick war, when Hannibal beſieged Rome, and was very near making himſelf maſter of it, a field on which part of his army lay, being offered to ſale at that time, was preſently purchaſed, in a firm belief that the Roman valour would raiſe the ſiege, *lib.* 2. *cap.* 6. And have not we much more reaſon to venture our all upon the word of God, and to embark in Zion's intereſts, which will undoubtedly be the prevailing intereſts at laſt? *Non ſi male nunc & olim ſic erit.*

16. ¶ Now when I had delivered the evidence of the purchaſe unto Baruch the ſon of Neriah, I prayed unto the LORD, ſaying, 17. Ah, LORD God, behold, thou haſt made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and ſtretched out arm, *and* there is nothing too hard for thee. 18. Thou ſheweſt loving kindneſs unto thouſands, and recompenſeſt the iniquity of the fathers into the boſom of their children after them: the great, the mighty God, the LORD of hoſts *is* his name, 19. Great in counſel, and mighty in work (for thine eyes *are* open upon all the ways of the ſons of men, to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings) 20. Which haſt ſet ſigns and wonders in the land of Egypt, *even* unto this day, and in Iſrael, and amongſt *other* men, and haſt made thee a name, as at this day, 21. And haſt brought forth thy people Iſrael out of the land of Egypt, with ſigns and with wonders, and with a ſtrong hand, and with a ſtretched out arm, and with great terror, 22. And haſt given them this land which thou didſt ſwear to their fathers to give them, a land flowing with milk and honey. 23. And they came in and poſſeſſed it, but they obeyed not thy voice, neither walked in thy law, they have done nothing of all that thou commandeſt them to do: therefore thou haſt cauſed all this evil to come upon them. 24. Behold the mounts, they are come unto the city to take it, and the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans that fight againſt it, becauſe of the ſword, and of the famine, and of the peſtilence; and what thou haſt ſpoken is come to paſs, and behold, thou ſeeſt *it*. 25. And thou haſt ſaid unto me, O LORD God, Buy thee the field for money, and take witneſſes: for the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans.

We have here Jeremiah's prayer to God, upon occaſion of the diſcoveries God had made to him of his purpoſes concerning this nation, to pull it down, and in proceſs of time to build it up again, which puzzled the prophet himſelf, who, though he delivered his meſſages faithfully, yet in reflection upon them was mightily at a loſs within himſelf, how to reconcile them; and in that perplexity he poured out his ſoul before God in prayer, and ſo gave himſelf eaſe. That which diſturbed him was not the ill bargain he ſeemed to have made for himſelf, in purchaſing a field that he was likely to have no good of; but the caſe of his people, for whom he was ſtill a kind and faithful interceſſor, and he was willing to hope, that if God had ſo much mercy in ſtore for them

here-

hereafter as he had promiſed, he would not proceed with ſo much ſeverity againſt them now, as he had threatned. Before Jeremiah went to prayer, he delivered the deeds that concerned his new purchaſe to Baruch, which may intimate to us, that when we are going to worſhip God, we ſhould get our minds as clear as may be from the cares and encumbrances of this world. Jeremiah was in priſon, in diſtreſs, in the dark about the meaning of God's providences, and then he prays. Note, Prayer is a ſalve for every ſore. Whatever is a burden to us, we may by prayer caſt it upon the Lord, and then be eaſy.

In this prayer, or meditation,

1. Jeremiah adores God and his infinite perfections, and gives him the glory due to his name as the creator, upholder, and benefactor of the whole creation; thereby owning his irreſiſtible power, that he can do what he will, and his unconteſtable ſovereignty, that he may do what he will, *ver.* 17, 18, 19. Note, When at any time we are perplexed about the particular methods and diſpenſations of providence, it is good for us to have recourſe to our firſt principles, and to ſatisfy ourſelves with the general doctrines of God's wiſdom, power and goodneſs. Let us conſider as Jeremiah doth here, (1.) That God is the fountain of all being, power, life, motion and perfection; he *made the heaven and the earth with his out ſtretched arm*, and therefore who can controll him? who dares contend with him? (2.) That with him nothing is impoſſible, no difficulty inſuperable. *Nothing is too hard for thee*: when human skill and power are quite nonpluſſed, *with God is ſtrength and wiſdom* ſufficient to maſter all the oppoſition. (3.) That he is a God of boundleſs, bottomleſs mercy: that is his darling attribute; it is his goodneſs that is his glory; thou not only art kind, but *ſheweſt loving kindneſs*, not to a few, to here and there one, but *to thouſands*, thouſands of perſons, thouſands of generations. (4.) That he is a God of impartial and inflexible juſtice. His reprieves are not pardons, but if in mercy he ſpares the parents that they may be led to repentance, yet ſuch a hatred has he to ſin, and ſuch a diſpleaſure againſt ſinners, that he *recompenſeth their iniquity into the boſom of their children*, and yet doth them no wrong: ſo hateful is the unrighteouſneſs of man, and ſo jealous of its own honour is the righteouſneſs of God. (5.) That he is a God of univerſal dominion and command. He is *the great* God, for he is the *mighty God*, and might among men makes them great. He is *the Lord of hoſts*, of all hoſts, that is his name, and he anſwers his name, for all the hoſts of heaven and earth, of men and angels, are at his beck. (6.) That he contrives every thing for the beſt, and effects every thing as he contrived it. He is *great in counſel*; ſo vaſt are the reaches, and ſo deep are the deſigns of his wiſdom, and he is *mighty in doing*, according to the counſel of his will. Now ſuch a God as this is not to be quarrelled with. His ſervice is to be conſtantly adhered to, and all his diſpoſals cheerfully acquieſced in.

2. He acknowledgeth the univerſal cognizance God takes of all the actions of the children of men, and the unerring judgment he paſſeth upon them, *ver.* 19. *Thine eyes are open upon all the ſons of men*, wherever they are, beholding the evil and the good, and upon all *their ways*, both the courſe they take, and every ſtep they take, not as an unconcerned ſpectator, but as an obſerving judge, *to give every one according to his ways*, and *according* to his deſerts, which are *the fruit of his doings*, for men ſhall find God as they are found of him.

3. He recounts the great things God had done for his people Iſrael formerly. (1.) He brought them out of Egypt, that houſe of bondage, with *ſigns* and *wonders* which remain, if not in the marks of them, yet in the memorials of them, even *unto this day*, for it would never be forgotten, not only in Iſrael, who were minded of it every year by the ordinance of the paſſover, but *among other men*, all the neighbour nations ſpoke of it, as that which redounded exceedingly to the glory of the God of Iſrael, and made him a name *as at this day*. This is repeated again, *ver.* 21. that God *brought them forth*, not only with comforts and joys to them, but with glory to himſelf, *with ſigns and wonders*, witneſs the ten plagues, with a *ſtrong hand*, too ſtrong for the Egyptians themſelves, and with a *ſtretched out arm*, that reached Pharaoh, as proud as he was, and *with great terror* to them and all about them. This ſeems to refer to *Deut.* iv. 34. (2.) He brought them into Canaan, that good land, that land *flowing with milk and honey*, he *ſware to their fathers to give it them*, and becauſe he would perform his oath, he did give it to the children, *ver.* 22. and they *came in* and *poſſeſſed it*. Jeremiah mentions this both as an aggravation of their ſin and diſobedience, and alſo as a plea with God to work deliverance for them. Note, It is good for us often to reflect upon the great things that God did for his church formerly, eſpecially in the firſt erecting of it, that work of wonder.

4. He bewails the rebellions they had been guilty of againſt God, and the judgments God had brought upon them for theſe rebellions. It is a ſad account he here gives of the ungrateful carriage of that people towards God. He had done every thing that he promiſed them to do, they had acknowledged it, 1 *Kings* viii. 56. but they had *done nothing of all that he commanded them to do*, ver. 23. they made no conſcience of any of *his laws*, they *walked not* in them, paid no reſpect to any of his calls by his prophets, for they *obeyed not his voice*. And therefore he owns that God was righteous in *cauſing all this evil to come upon them*. The city is beſieged, is attacked *by the ſword* without, is weakened and waſted by the *famine* and *peſtilence* within; ſo that it is ready to fall *into the hands of the Chaldeans that fight againſt it*, ver. 24. it is *given into their hands*, ver. 25. Now, (1.) He compares the preſent ſtate of Jeruſalem with the divine predictions, and finds that what God *hath ſpoken*, is *come to paſs*. God had given them fair warning of it before, which if they had regarded, the ruin had been prevented; but if they will not do what God has commanded, they can expect no other but that he ſhould do what he has threatned. (2.) He commits the preſent ſtate of Jeruſalem to the divine conſideration and compaſſion, *ver.* 24. *Behold the mounts*, or *ramparts*, or the *engines*, which they make uſe of to batter the city, and beat down the wall of it: And again, *Behold, thou ſeeſt it*, and takeſt cognizance of it. Is this the city that thou haſt choſen to put thy name there? And ſhall it be thus abandoned? He neither complains of God for what he had done, nor preſcribes to God what he ſhould do, but deſires he would behold their caſe, and is pleaſed to think that he doth behold it. Whatever trouble we are in upon a perſonal or publick account, we may comfort ourſelves with this, that God ſees it, and ſees how to remedy it.

5. He ſeems deſirous to be let further into the meaning of this order God had now given him to purchaſe his kinſman's field, *ver.* 25. *Though the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans*, and no man is likely to enjoy what he has, yet *thou haſt ſaid unto me, Buy thee the field.* As ſoon as he underſtood that it was the mind of God, he did it, and made no objections, was not diſobedient to the heavenly viſion: But when he had done it, he deſired better to underſtand why God had ordered him to do it, becauſe the thing looked odd and unaccountable. Note, Though we are bound to follow God with an implicit obedience, yet we ſhould endeavour that it may be more and more an intelligent obedience. We muſt never diſpute God's ſtatutes and judgments, but we may and muſt enquire, *What mean theſe ſtatutes and judgments?* Deut. vi. 20.

26. ¶ Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah, ſaying, 27. Behold, I *am* the LORD, the God of all fleſh: Is there any thing too hard for me? 28. Therefore thus ſaith the LORD, Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the Chaldeans, and into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and he ſhall take it. 29. And the Chaldeans that fight againſt this city, ſhall come and ſet fire on this city and burn it, with the houſes upon whoſe roofs they have offered incenſe unto Baal, and poured out drink-offerings, to other gods, to provoke me to anger. 30. For the children of Iſrael, and the children of Judah have only done evil before me from their youth: for the children of Iſrael have only provoked me to anger with the work of their hands, ſaith the LORD. 31. For this city hath been to me, *as* a provocation of mine anger, and of my fury, from the day that they built it, even unto this day; that I ſhould remove it from before my face: 32. Becauſe of all the evil of the children of Iſrael, and of the children of Judah, which they have done to provoke me to anger, they, their kings, their princes, their prieſts, and their prophets, and the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jeruſalem. 33. And they have turned unto me the back, and not the face; though I taught them, riſing up early, and teaching *them*, yet they have not hearkened to receive inſtruction. 34. But they ſet their abominations in the houſe (which is called by my name) to defile it. 35. And they built the high places of Baal, which *are* in the valley of the ſon of Hinnom, to cauſe their ſons and their daughters to paſs through *the fire* unto Molech, which I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind, that they ſhould do this abomination to cauſe Judah to ſin. 36. And now therefore thus ſaith the LORD the God of Iſrael concerning this city, whereof ye ſay, It ſhall be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon, by the ſword, and by the famine, and by the peſtilence: 37. Behold, I will gather them out of all countries whither I have driven them in mine anger and in my fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cauſe them to dwell ſafely. 38. And they ſhall be my people, and I will be their God. 39. And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them. 40. And I will make an everlaſting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they ſhall not depart from me. 41. Yea,

41. Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly, with my whole heart, and with my whole soul. 42. For thus saith the LORD, Like as I have brought all this great evil upon this people, so will I bring upon them all the good that I have promised them. 43. And fields shall be bought in this land, whereof ye say, *It is* desolate without man or beast, it is given into the hand of the Chaldeans. 44. Men shall buy fields for money, and subscribe evidences, and seal *them*, and take witnesses in the land of Benjamin, and in the places about Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, and in the cities of the mountains, and in the cities of the valley, and in the cities of the south: for I will cause the captivity to return, saith the LORD.

We have here God's return to Jeremiah's prayer, designed to quiet his mind, and make him easy; and it is a full discovery of the purposes of God's wrath against the present generations, and the purposes of his grace concerning the future generations. Jeremiah knew not how to *sing both of mercy and judgment*, but God here teacheth him, and to sing unto him of both. When we know not how to reconcile one word of God with another, yet we may be sure that both are true, both are pure, both shall be made good, and not one iota or tittle of either shall fall to the ground. When Jeremiah was ordered to buy the field in Anathoth, he was willing to hope that God was about to revoke the sentence of his wrath, and to order the Chaldeans to raise the siege: No, saith God, the execution of the sentence shall go on, Jerusalem shall be laid in ruins. Note, Assurances of future mercy, must not be interpreted as securities from present troubles. But lest Jeremiah should think that his being ordered to buy this field, intimated that all the mercy God had in store for his people after their return, was only that they should have the possession of their own land again; he further acquaints him that that was but a type and figure of those spiritual blessings which should then be abundantly bestowed upon them, unspeakably more valuable than fields and vineyards. So that in this *word of the Lord*, which came here to Jeremiah, first as dreadful threatnings, and then as precious promises, as perhaps any we have in all the Old Testament, life and death, good and evil are here set before us, let us consider and choose wisely.

1. The ruin of Judah and Jerusalem is here pronounced; the decree is gone forth, and shall not be recalled.

(1.) God here asserts his own sovereignty and power, *ver.* 27. *Behold, I am Jehovah*, a self-existent, self sufficient Being; *I am that I am*; *I am the God of all flesh*, i. e. of all mankind, here called *flesh*, because weak, and unable to contend with God, *Psal.* lvi. 4. and because wicked and corrupt, and unapt to comply with God. God is the creator of all, and makes what use he pleases of all. He that is the God of Israel, is the *God of all flesh*, and of *the spirits of all flesh*; and, if Israel were cast off, could raise up a people to his name out of some other nation. If he be the *God of all flesh*, he may well ask, *Is any thing too hard for me?* What can he not do from whom all the powers of men are derived, and on whom they depend, and by whom all their actions are directed and governed? Whatever he designs to do, whether in wrath or in mercy, nothing can hinder him, or defeat his designs.

(2.) He abides by what he had often said of the destruction of Jerusalem by the king of Babylon, *ver.* 28. *I will give this city into his hand*, now he is grasping at it, *and he shall take it*, and make a prey of it, *ver.* 29. *The Chaldeans shall come and set fire to it*, shall burn it and all the *houses in it*, God's house not excepted, nor the king's neither.

(3.) He assigns the reason for these severe proceedings against the city that had been so much in his favour. It is sin, it is that, and nothing else that ruins it. (1.) They were impudent and daring in sin: They *offered incense to Baal*, not in corners, as men ashamed or afraid of being discovered, but upon the *tops of their houses*, ver. 29. in defiance of God's justice. (2.) They designed an affront to God herein. They did it *to provoke me to anger*, ver. 29. *They have only provoked me to anger with the works of their hands*, ver. 30. they could not promise themselves any pleasure, profit or honour out of it, but did it on purpose to offend God. And again, *ver.* 32. *All the evil which they have done was to provoke me to anger.* They knew he was a jealous God in the matters of his worship, and there they resolved to try his jealousy, and dare him to his face. Jerusalem has been *to me a provocation of my anger and fury*, ver. 31. Their carriage in every thing was provoking. (3.) They began betimes, and had continued all along provoking to God. They have *done evil before me from their youth*, ever since they were first formed into a people, *ver.* 30, witness their murmurings and rebellions in the wilderness. And as for Jerusalem, though it was the *holy city*, it has been *a provocation* to the holy God, *from the day that they built it even to this day*, ver. 32. O what reason have we to lament the little honour God has from this world, and the great dishonour that is done him, when even in Judah, where *he is known*, and *his name is great*, and in Salem where his *tabernacle is*, there was always that found that was a provocation to him! (4.) All orders and degrees of men contributed to the common guilt, and therefore were justly involved in the common ruin. Not only the *children of Israel* that had revolted from the temple, but the *children of Judah* too that still adhered to it. Not only the common people, the *men of Judah*, and *inhabitants of Jerusalem*, but those that should have reproved and restrained sin in others, were themselves ringleaders in it, their *kings* and *princes*, their *priests* and *prophets*. (5.) God had again and again called them to repentance, but they turned a deaf ear to his calls, and rudely turned their back on him that called them, though he was their master to whom they were bound in duty, and their benefactor to whom they were bound in gratitude and interest, *ver.* 33. *I taught them* better manners, with as much care as ever any tender parent taught a child, *rising up early, and teaching them*, studying to adapt the teaching to their capacities, taking them betimes, when they might have been most pliable, but all in vain, they *turned not the face to me*, would not so much as look upon me, nay, they *turned the back upon me*, an expression of the highest contempt; *as he called them*, like froward children, *so they went from him*, Hos. xi. 2. *They have not hearkened to receive instruction*, they regarded not a word that was said to them, though it was designed for their own good. (6.) There was in their idolatries an impious contempt of God, for, *ver.* 34. *They set their abominations*, their idols, which they knew to be in the highest degreee abominable to God, they set them *in the house which is called by my name to defile it.* They had their idols not only in their high places and groves, but even in God's temple. (7.) They were guilty of the most unnatural cruelty to their own children, for they *sacrificed them to Moloch.* ver. 35. Thus because they *liked not to retain God in their knowledge*, but *changed his glory* into shame, they were justly given up to vile affections, and stript of natural ones, and their glory was turned into shame.

And lastly, What was the consequence of all this? (1.) They *caused Judah to sin*, ver. 35. The whole country was infected with the contagious idolatries and iniquities of Jerusalem. (2.) They brought ruin upon themselves. It was as if they had done it on purpose that God *should remove them from before his face*, ver. 31. they would throw themselves out of his favour.

2. The restoration of Judah and Jerusalem is here promised, *ver.* 36, &c. God will in judgment remember mercy, and there will a time come, a set time to favour Zion.

Observe, 1. The despair to which this people were now at length brought. When the judgment was threatned at a distance, they had no fear, when it attacked them they had no hope: They said concerning the city, *ver.* 36. *it shall be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon*, not by any cowardise or ill conduct of ours, but by *the sword, famine, and pestilence:* Concerning the country they said, with vexation, *ver.* 43. *It is desolate without man or beast*, there is no relief, there is no remedy; *It is given into the hand of the Chaldeans.* Note, Deep security commonly ends in deep despair; whereas those that keep up a holy fear at all times, have a good hope to support themselves in the worst of times. 2. The hope that God gives them of mercy that he had in store for them hereafter. Though their carcases must fall in captivity, yet their children after them should again see this good land, and the goodness of God in it.

1. They shall be brought up from their captivity, and shall come and settle again in this land, *ver.* 37. They had been under God's *anger*, and *fury*, and *great wrath*, but now they shall partake of his grace, and love, and great favour. He had *dispersed* them, and driven them *into all countries*; those that fled dispersed themselves; those that fell into the enemies hands were dispersed by them in policy, to prevent combinations among them: God's hand was in both: But now God will find them out, and *gather them* out of all the *countries whither they were driven*, as he promised in the law, *Deut.* xxx. 3, 4. and the saints had prayed, *Psal.* cvi. 47, *Neh.* i. 9. He had banished them, but he will *bring them again to this place*, which they could not but have an affection for. For many years past while they were in their own land, they were continually exposed, and terrified with the alarms of war; but now *I will cause them to dwell safely.* Being reformed and returned to God, neither their own consciences within, nor their enemies without, shall be a *terror to them.* He promiseth, *ver.* 41. I *will plant them in this land assuredly*; not only I will certainly do it, but they shall here enjoy a holy security and repose, and they shall take root here, shall be *planted in stability*, and not again be unfixed and shaken.

2. God will renew his covenant with them, a covenant of grace, the blessings of which are spiritual, and such as will work good things in them, to qualify them for the great things God intended to do for them. It is called an *everlasting covenant*, ver. 40. not only because God will be for ever faithful to it, but because the consequences of it will be everlasting: For doubtless here the promises look farther than to Israel according to the flesh, and are sure to all believers, to every *Israelite indeed.* Good christians may apply them to themselves, and plead them with God, may claim the benefit, and take the comfort of them.

1. God will own them for his, and make over himself to them to be theirs, *ver.* 38. *They shall be my people.* He will make them his, by working in them all the characters and dispositions of his people, and then he will protect, and guide, and govern them as his

his people: And to make them truly, compleatly, and eternally happy, *I will be their God.* They shall serve and worship God as theirs, and cleave to him only, and he will approve himself theirs. All he is, all he has, shall be engaged and employed for their good.

2. God will give them *a heart to fear him*, ver. 39. That which he requires of those whom he takes into covenant with him as his people, is, that they fear him, that they reverence his majesty, dread his wrath, stand in awe of his authority, pay homage to him, and give him the glory due unto his name. Now what God requires of them he here promiseth to work in them, pursuant to his choice of them as his people. Note, As it is God's prerogative to fashion mens hearts, so it is his promise to his people to fashion theirs aright: And a heart to fear God is indeed a good heart, and well fashioned. It is repeated again, *ver.* 40. *I will put my fear in their hearts*, i. e. work in them gracious principles and dispositions, that shall influence and govern their whole conversation. Teachers may put good things into our heads, but it is God only that can put them into our hearts; that can work in us *both to will and to do.*

3. He will give them *one heart, and one way.* In order to their walking in *one way*, he will give them *one heart:* as the heart is, so will the way be, and both shall be one, that is, (1.) They shall be each of them one with themselves; *one heart* is the same with a *new heart*, Ezek. xi. 19. The heart is then one when it is fully determined for God, and intirely devoted to God; when the eye is single, and God's glory alone aimed at; when our hearts are fixed, trusting in God, and we are uniform and universal in our obedience to him, then the heart is one and the way one; and unless the heart is thus steady the goings will not be stedfast. From this promise we may take direction and encouragement to pray with David, *Psal.* lxxxvi. 11. *Unite my heart to fear thy name*; for God saith, *I will give them one heart, that they may fear me.* (2.) They shall be all of them one with each other. All good christians shall be incorporated into one body, Jews and Gentiles shall become *one sheepfold*; and they shall all, as far as they are sanctified, have a disposition to love one another; the gospel they profess having in it the strongest inducements to mutual love, and the Spirit that dwells in them being the Spirit of love. Though they may have different apprehensions about lesser things, they shall be all one in the great things of God, being renewed after the same image: though they may have many paths, they have but *one way*, that of serious godliness.

4. He will effectually provide for their perseverance in grace, and the perpetuating of the covenant between him and them. They had been happy when they were first planted in Canaan, like Adam in paradise, if they had not departed from God. And therefore now they are restored to their happiness they shall be confirmed in it, by the preventing of their departures from God, and this will compleat their bliss. (1.) God will *never leave nor forsake them, I will not turn away from them to do them good.* Earthly princes are fickle, and their greatest favourites have fallen under their frowns; but God's *mercy endureth for ever*; whom he loves, he *loves to the end.* God may seem to turn from his people, *Isa.* liv. 8. but even then he doth not turn from doing and designing them good. (2.) They shall never leave nor forsake him: That is the thing we are in danger of; we have no reason to distrust God's fidelity and constancy, but our own. And therefore it is here promised, that God will give them *a heart* to fear him *for ever*, all days, to be in his fear every day, and all the day long, *Prov.* xxiii. 17. and to continue so to the *end of their days.* He will put such a principle *into their hearts*, as that they *shall not depart from him.* Even those who have given up their names to God, if they be left to themselves, will *depart from him*; but the fear of God ruling in the heart, will prevent their departure. That, and nothing else, will do it. If we continue close and faithful to God, it is owing purely to his almighty grace, and not to any strength or resolution of our own.

5. He will entail a blessing upon their seed, will give them grace to fear him, *for the good of them, and of their children after them.* As their departures from God had been to the prejudice of their children, so their adherence to God should be to the advantage of their children. We cannot better consult the good of posterity, than by setting up, and keeping up, the fear and worship of God in our families.

6. He will take a pleasure in their posterity, and will do every thing to advance it, *ver.* 41. *I will rejoice over them to do them good.* God will therefore *do them good*, because he *rejoiceth over them*; they are dear to him, he makes his boast of them, and therefore will not only *do them good*, but will delight in doing them good. When he punisheth them it is with reluctancy, *How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?* But when he restores them it is with satisfaction, he *rejoiceth in doing them good:* We ought therefore to serve him with pleasure, and to rejoice in all opportunities of serving him. He is himself a chearful giver, and therefore loves a chearful servant. *I will plant them* (saith God) *with my whole heart, and with my whole soul.* He will be intent upon it, and take delight in it; he will make it the business of his providence to settle them again in Canaan, and the various dispensations of providence shall concur to it. All things shall appear at last so to have been working for the good of the church, that it will be said the Governor of the world was intirely taken up with care of his church.

7. These promises shall as surely be performed as the foregoing threatnings were, and the accomplishment of those, notwithstanding the security of the people, might confirm their expectation of the performance of these, notwithstanding their present despair, *ver.* 42. *As I have brought all this great evil upon them*, pursuant to the threatnings, and for the glory of divine justice, *so I will bring upon them all this good*, pursuant to the promise, and for the glory of divine mercy. He that is faithful to his threatnings, will much more be so to his promises: And he will comfort his people *according to the time that he has afflicted them.* The churches shall have rest after the days of adversity.

8. As an earnest of all this, houses and lands shall again take a good price in Judah and Jerusalem, and though now they are a drug, there shall again be purchasers enow for them, *ver.* 43, 44. *Fields shall be bought in this land*, and people will covet to have lands here rather than any where else: Lands, wherever they lie, will go off, not only in *the places about Jerusalem*, but *in the cities of Judah*, and of Israel too, whether they lie *on mountains*, or in vallies, or *in the south*, in all parts of the country, *men shall buy fields, and subscribe evidences.* Trade shall revive, for they shall have money enough to buy land with; husbandry shall revive, for those that have money shall covet to lay it out upon lands: laws shall again have their due course, for they shall *subscribe evidences and seal them:* This is mentioned to reconcile Jeremiah to his new purchase, though he had bought a piece of ground, and could not go see it, yet he must believe that was the pledge of many a purchase, and those but faint resemblances of the purchased possessions in the heavenly Canaan, reserved for all those who have God's fear in their hearts, and do not depart from him.

CHAP. XXXIII.

The scope of this chapter is much the same with that of the foregoing chapter, to confirm the promise of the restoration of the Jews, notwithstanding the present desolations of their country, and dispersions of their people: And these promises have both in type and tendency a reference as far forward as to the gospel church, to which this second edition of the Jewish church was at length to resign its dignities and privileges. It is here promised, 1. *That the city shall be rebuilt, and re-established* in statu quo, *ver.* 1,—6. 2. *That the captives having their sins pardoned shall be restored*, ver. 7, 8. 3. *That this shall redound very much to the glory of God*, ver. 9. 4. *That the country shall have both joy and plenty*, ver. 10,—14. 5. *That way shall be made for the coming of the Messiah*, ver. 15, 16. 6. *That the house of David, the house of Levi, and the house of Israel shall flourish again, and be established, and all three in the kingdom of Christ; a gospel ministry, and the gospel church shall continue while the world stands*, ver. 17,—26.

1. MOreover, the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah the second time, (while he was yet shut up in the court of the prison) saying, 2. Thus saith the LORD, the maker thereof, the LORD that formed it, to establish it, the LORD *is* his name, 3. Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not. 4. For thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning the houses of this city, and concerning the houses of the kings of Judah, *which are* thrown down by the mounts, and by the sword, 5. They come to fight with the Chaldeans, but *it is* to fill them with the dead bodies of men, whom I have slain in mine anger, and in my fury, and for all whose wickedness I have hid my face from this city. 6. Behold, I will bring it health and cure, and I will cure them, and will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth. 7. And I will cause the captivity of Judah, and the captivity of Israel to return, and will build them as at the first. 8. And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me, and I will pardon all their iniquities whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me. 9. ¶ And it shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and an honour before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto them: and they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness, and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it.

Observe here, 1. The date of this comfortable prophecy which God intrusted Jeremiah with: It is not exact in the time, only that it was after that in the foregoing chapter, when things were still growing worse and worse; it was *the second time*; *God speaketh once, yea, twice*, for the encouragement of his people. We are not only so disobedient that we have need of *precept upon precept* to bring us to our duty, but so distrustful that we have need of promise upon promise to bring us to our comfort. This word, as the former, *came to Jeremiah* when *he was in prison.* Note, No con-

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finement can deprive God's people of his presence; no locks or bars can shut out his gracious visits: Nay, oftentimes *as their afflictions abound, their consolations much more abound*, and they have the most reviving communications of his favour then, when the world frowns upon them: Paul's sweetest epistles were those that bare date out of a prison.

2. The prophecy it self: A great deal of comfort is wrapt up in it, for the relief of the captives, to keep them from sinking into despair. Observe,

(1.) Who it is that secures this comfort to them, *ver.* 2. It is *the Lord, the maker thereof, the Lord that framed it.* He is the maker and former of heaven and earth, and therefore has all power in his hands; so it refers to Jeremiah's prayer, *chap.* xxxii. 17. He is the maker and former of Jerusalem, of Zion, built them at first, and therefore can rebuild them, built them for his own praise, and therefore will. He *formed it to establish it*, and therefore it shall be established till those things be introduced which cannot be shaken, but shall remain for ever. He is the maker and former of this promise; he has laid the scheme for Jerusalem's restoration, and he that has formed it, will establish it, that has made the promise, will make it good; for Jehovah *is his name:* A God giving being to his promises by the performance of them, which when he doth he is known by that name, *Exod.* vi. 3. A perfecting God; when the heavens and the earth were finished, then, and not till then, the Creator is called Jehovah, *Gen.* ii. 1.

(2.) How this comfort must be obtained and fetched in; by prayer, *ver.* 3. *Call upon me, and I will answer thee.* The prophet having received some intimations of this kind, must be humbly earnest with God for further discoveries of his kind intentions. He had prayed, *chap.* xxxii. 16. but he must pray again. Note, Those that expect to receive comforts from God, must continue instant in prayer; we must *call upon him*, and then he *will answer us*; Christ himself must *ask, and it shall be given him*, Psalm ii. 8. *I will shew thee great and mighty things*, i. e. give thee a clear and full prospect of them; *hidden things*, which though in part discovered already, yet *thou knowest not*, thou canst not understand or give credit to. Or, this may refer not only to the prediction of these things which Jeremiah, if he desire it, shall be favoured with, but to the performance of the things themselves, which the people of God, encouraged by this prediction, must pray for. Note, Promises are given not to supersede, but to quicken and encourage prayer. See *Ezek.* xxxvi. 37.

(3.) How deplorable the condition of Jerusalem was, which made it necessary that such comforts as these should be provided for it; and notwithstanding which, its restoration should be brought about in due time, *ver.* 4, 5. *The houses of this city*, not excepting those of *the kings of Judah, are thrown down by the mounts*, or engines of battery, *and by the sword*, or axes, or hammers. It is the same word that is used, *Ezek.* xxvi. 9. *With his axes he shall break down thy towers.* The strongest, stateliest houses, and those that were best furnished, were levelled with the ground. The fifth verse comes in in a parenthesis, giving a further instance of the present calamitous state of Jerusalem: They that *came to fight with the Chaldeans*, to beat them off from the siege, did more hurt than good, provoked the enemy to be more fierce and furious in their assaults, so that the houses in Jerusalem were *filled with the dead bodies of men*, that died of the wounds they received in sallying out upon the besiegers. God saith, they were such *as he had slain in his anger*, for the enemies sword was his sword, and their anger his anger. But it seems, the men that were slain were generally such as had distinguished themselves by their wickedness, for they were the very men for whose wickedness God did now hide himself *from this city*; so that he was just in all he brought upon them.

(4.) What the blessings are which God has in store for Judah and Jerusalem, such as will redress all their grievances.

1. Is their state diseased? Is it wounded? God will provide effectually for the healing of it, though the disease was thought mortal, and incurable, *Jer.* viii. *ult.* The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint, but, *ver.* 6. *I will bring it health and cure*, I will prevent the death, remove the sickness, and set all to rights again, *chap.* xxx. 17. Note, Be the case never so desperate, if God undertake the cure he will effect it. The sin of Jerusalem was the sickness of it, *Isa.* i. 6. its reformation therefore will be its recovery. And the following words tell us how that is wrought, *I will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth*, i. e. I will give it them in due time, and give them an encouraging prospect of it in the mean time. Peace stands here for all good; *peace and truth* is peace according to the promise, and in pursuance of that: Or, *peace and truth* is peace and the true religion; peace and the true worship of God, in opposition to the many falshoods and deceits by which they had been led away from God. We may apply it more generally, and observe, 1. That peace and truth are the great subject matter of divine revelation: These promises here lead us to the gospel of Christ, and in that God has revealed to us *peace and truth*, the method of true peace; truth to direct us, peace to make us easy. *Grace and truth*, and abundance of both, *come by Jesus Christ.* Peace and truth are the life of the soul, and Christ *came that we might have* that *life, and might have it more abundantly.* Christ rules by the power of truth, *John* xviii. 37. and by it he gives *abundance of peace*, Psalm lxxii. 7. and lxxxv. 10. 2. That the divine revelation of peace and truth brings health and cure to all those that by faith receive it: It heals the soul of the diseases it has contracted, as it is a means of sanctification, *John* xvii. 17. *He sent his word, and healed them:* And it puts the soul into good order, and keeps it in frame, and fit for the employments and enjoyments of the spiritual and divine life.

2. Are they scattered and enslaved, and is their nation laid in ruins? *I will cause their captivity to return*, ver. 7. both that of Israel and that of Judah, for though those who returned under Zerubbabel were chiefly of Judah and Benjamin, and Levi, yet afterwards many of all the other tribes returned; and I will rebuild them, *as I built them at first.* When they by repentance do their first works, God will by their restoration do his first works.

3. Is sin the procuring cause of all their troubles? That shall be pardoned and subdued, and so the root of the judgments shall be killed, *ver.* 8. 1. By sin they are become filthy and odious to God's holiness, but God will cleanse them, and purify *them from their iniquity*; as those that were ceremonially unclean, and were therefore shut out from the tabernacle, when they were sprinkled with the *water of purification*, had liberty of access to it again, so had they to their own land, and the privileges of it, when God had *cleansed them from their iniquities.* In allusion to that sprinkling, David prays, *Purge me with hyssop.* 2. By sin they are become guilty, and obnoxious to his justice; but he will *pardon all their iniquities*, will remove the punishment to which for sin they were bound over. All, that by sanctifying grace are cleansed from the filth of sin, by pardoning mercy are freed from the guilt of it.

4. Have both their sins and their sufferings turned to the dishonour of God? their reformation and restoration shall redound as much to his praise, *ver.* 9. Jerusalem thus rebuilt, Judah thus repeopled, *shall be to me a name of joy*, as pleasing to God as ever they have been provoking, *and a praise and an honour before all the nations.* They being thus restored shall glorify God by their services of him, and he shall glorify himself by his favours to them. This renewed nation shall be as much a reputation to religion, as formerly it has been a reproach to it. The nations *shall hear of all the good that* God has wrought in them by his grace, and *of all the good* he has wrought for them by his providence. The wonders of their return out of Babylon shall make as great a noise in the world, as ever the wonders of their deliverance out of Egypt did. And *they shall fear and tremble for all this goodness.* 1. The people of God themselves *shall fear and tremble*; they shall be much surprized at it, shall be afraid of offending so good a God, and of forfeiting his favour, *Hos.* iii. 5. *They shall fear the Lord, and his goodness.* 2. The neighbour nations *shall fear* because of the *prosperity of Jerusalem*; shall look upon the growing greatness of the Jewish nation as really formidable, and shall be afraid of making them their enemies, when the church is *fair as the moon*, and *clear as the sun*, she is *terrible as an army with banners.*

10. Thus saith the LORD, Again there shall be heard in this place (which ye say *shall be* desolate without man and without beast, *even* in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, *that are* desolate without man and without inhabitant, and without beast) 11. The voice of joy, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the voice of them that shall say, Praise the LORD of hosts, for the LORD *is* good, for his mercy *endureth* for ever, *and* of them that shall bring the sacrifice of praise into the house of the LORD; for I will cause to return the captivity of the land, as at the first, saith the LORD. 12. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Again in this place *which is* desolate without man and without beast, and in all the cities thereof, shall be an habitation of shepherds causing *their* flocks to lie down. 13. In the cities of the mountains, in the cities of the vale, and in the cities of the south, and in the land of Benjamin, and in the places about Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah shall the flocks pass again under the hands of him that telleth *them*, saith the LORD. 14. Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel, and to the house of Judah. 15. ¶ In those days, and at that time will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David, and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land. 16. In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this *is the name* wherewith she shall be called, The LORD our righteousness.

Here is a farther prediction of the happy state of Judah and Jerusalem after their glorious return out of captivity, issuing gloriously at length in the kingdom of the Messiah.

1. It is promised that the people that were long in sorrow shall again be filled with joy. Every one concluded now that the coun-

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try would lie for ever desolate, that *no beasts* should be found in the land of Judah, no inhabitants *in the streets of Jerusalem*, and consequently there would be nothing but a universal and perpetual melancholy, *ver.* 10. but though weeping may endure for a time, joy will return. It was threatned, *chap.* vii. 34. and xvi. 9. that *the voice of joy and gladness should cease* there, but here it is promised that they shall revive again, that *the voice of joy and gladness shall be heard* there, because *the captivity shall be returned*, for then was *their mouth filled with laughter*, Psalm cxxvi. 1, 2. 1. There shall be common joy there, *the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride*; marriages shall again be celebrated as formerly with songs, which in Babylon they had laid aside, for their harps were hung on the willow-trees. 2. There shall be religious joy there; temple songs shall be revived, *the Lord's songs*, which they could not *sing in a strange land*. There shall be heard, in their private houses, and in the cities of Judah, as well as in the temple, *the voice of them that shall say, Praise the Lord of hosts.* Note, Nothing is more the praise and honour of a people, than to have God praised and honoured among them: This shall compleat the mercy of their return and restoration, that with it they shall have hearts to be thankful for it, and give God the glory of it, the glory both of the power and of the goodness by which it is effected; they shall praise him both as *the Lord of hosts*, and as the God who *is good*, and whose *mercy endures for ever.* This, though a song of old, yet being sung upon this fresh occasion, will be a new song. We find this literally fulfilled at their return out of Babylon, *Ezra* iii. 11. They sung together in praising the Lord, *because he is good, for his mercy endures for ever.* The publick worship of God shall be diligently and constantly attended upon; they *shall bring the sacrifice of praise to the house of the Lord.* All the sacrifices were intended for the praise of God, but this seems to be meant of the spiritual sacrifices of humble adorations, and joyful thanksgivings, *the calves of our lips*, Hos. xiv. 2. which *shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock.* The Jews say, that in the days of the Messiah all sacrifices shall cease, but *the sacrifice of praise*, and to those days this promise has a further reference.

2. It is promised that the country which had lain long depopulated, should be replenished and stocked again. It was now desolate, *without man, and without beast*, but after their return, the pastures shall again be *clothed with flocks*, Psalm lxv. 13. *In all the cities of Judah and Benjamin there shall be a habitation of shepherds*, ver. 12, 13. This speaks, 1. The wealth of the country after their return. It shall not be a habitation of beggars, that have nothing, but of shepherds and husbandmen, men of substance, with good stocks upon the ground they are returned to. 2. The peace of the country. It shall not be a habitation of soldiers, nor shall there be tents and barracks set up to lodge them, but they shall be shepherds tents; for they shall hear no more the alarms of war, nor shall there be any to make even the shepherds afraid. See *Psalm* cxliv. 13, 14. 3. The industry of the country, and their return to their original plainness and simplicity, from which, in the corrupt ages, they had sadly degenerated. The seed of Jacob in their beginning gloried in this, that they were *shepherds*, Gen. xlvii. 3. and so they shall now be again, giving themselves wholly to that innocent employment, *causing their flocks to lie down*, ver. 12. and to *pass under the hands of him that telleth them*, ver. 13. for though their flocks are numerous, they are not numberless, nor shall they omit to number them, that they may know if any be missing, and may seek after it. Note, It is the prudence of those who have never so much of the world to keep an account of what they have. Some think they *pass under the hand of him that telleth them* that they may be *tithed*, Lev. xxvii. 32. Then we may take the comfort of what we have when God has had his dues out of it. Now because it seemed incredible that a people reduced as now they were, should ever recover such a degree of peace and plenty as this, here is subjoined a general ratification of these promises, *ver.* 14. *I will perform that good thing which I have promised.* Though the promise may sometimes work slowly towards an accomplishment, it works surely. *The days will come*, though they are long in coming.

3. To crown all these blessings which God has in store for them, here is a promise of the Messiah, and of that everlasting righteousness which he should bring in, *ver.* 15, 16. and, probably, this is *that good thing*, that great good thing, which in the latter days, days that were yet to come, God would perform, as he had promised to Judah and Israel, and which their return out of captivity, and their settlement again in their own land, was in order to. *From the captivity to Christ* is one of the famous periods, *Matt.* i. 17. This promise of the Messiah we had before, *chap.* xxiii. 5, 6. and there it came in as a confirmation of the promise of the shepherds which God would set over them, which would make one think that the promise here concerning the shepherds and their flocks, which introduceth it, is to be understood figuratively. Christ is here prophesied of, 1. As a rightful king; he is a *branch of righteousness*, not a usurper, for he *grows up unto David*, descends from his loins, with whom the covenant of royalty was made, and is that seed with whom that covenant should be established, so that his title is unexceptionable. 2. As a righteous king, righteous in enacting laws, waging wars, and giving judgment; righteous in vindicating those that suffer wrong, and punishing those that do wrong; *he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land.* This may point at Zerubbabel in the type, who governed with equity, not as Jehoiakim had done, *chap.* xxii. 17. but it has a farther reference to him to whom all judgment is committed, and who shall *judge the world in righteousness.* 3. As a king that shall protect his subjects from all injury. By him *Judah shall be saved* from wrath and the curse, and, being so saved, *Jerusalem shall dwell safely*, quiet from the fear of evil, and enjoying a holy security and serenity of mind, in a dependence upon the conduct of this prince of peace, this prince of their peace. 4. As a king that shall be praised by his subjects: *This is the name whereby they shall call him*, so the Chaldee reads it, the Syriac, and vulgar Latin; this name of his they shall celebrate, and triumph in, and by this name they shall call upon him. It may be read more agreeable to the original, *This is he who shall call her, the Lord our righteousness*, as Moses's altar is called Jehovah-nisse, *Exod.* xlviii. 15. and Jerusalem, Jehovah Shammah, *Ezek.* xlv. 35. intimating, that they glory in Jehovah as present with them, and *their banner*; so here the city is called, *The Lord our righteousness*, because they glory in Jehovah as their righteousness. That which was before said to be the name of Christ (saith Mr. Gataker) is here made the name of Jerusalem, the city of the Messias, the church of Christ. He it is that imparts righteousness to her, for he is *made of God to us righteousness*, and she by bearing that name professeth to have her whole righteousness, not from herself, but from him, *In the Lord have I righteousness and strength*, Isa. xlv. 24. and *we are made the righteousness of God in him.* The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall have this name of the Messias so much in their mouths, that they shall themselves be called by it.

17. ¶ For thus saith the LORD, David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel. 18. Neither shall the priests the Levites, want a man before me to offer burnt-offerings, and to kindle meat-offerings, and to do sacrifice continually. 19. ¶ And the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah, saying, 20. Thus saith the LORD, If you can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season: 21. *Then* may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne, and with the Levites the priests, my ministers. 22. As the host of heaven cannot be numbred, neither the sand of the sea measured: so will I multiply the seed of David my servant, and the Levites that minister unto me. 23. Moreover, the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying, 24. Considerest thou not what this people have spoken, saying, The two families which the LORD hath chosen, he hath even cast them off? thus they have despised my people, that they should be no more a nation before them. 25. Thus saith the LORD, If my covenant *be* not with day and night, *and if* I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth: 26. Then will I cast away the seed of Jacob, and David my servant, *so* that I will not take *any* of his seed *to be* rulers over the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: for I will cause their captivity to return, and have mercy on them.

Three of God's covenants, that of royalty with David and his seed, that of the priesthood with Aaron and his seed, and that of peculiarity with Abraham and his seed, seemed to have been all broken and lost while the captivity lasted, but it is here promised, that, notwithstanding that interruption and discontinuance for a time, they shall all three take place again, and the true intents and meaning of them all shall be abundantly answered in the New Testament blessings, typified by those conferred on the Jews after their return out of captivity.

1. The covenant of royalty shall be secured, and the promises of it shall have their full accomplishment in the kingdom of Christ, the son of David, *ver.* 17. The throne of Israel was overturned in the captivity, the crown was fallen from their head, there was not *a man to sit on the throne of Israel*, Jeconiah was written childless. After their return the house of David made a figure again: but it is in the Messiah that this promise is performed, that *David shall never want a man to sit on the throne of Israel:* And that David shall have *always a son to reign upon his throne:* For as long as the man Christ Jesus sits on the right hand of the throne of God, rules the world, and rules it for the good of the church, to which he is a quickning head, and glorified head over all things, as long as he is *king upon the holy hill of Zion*, David doth not want a successor, nor is the covenant with him broken. When the first begotten was brought into the world it was declared concerning him, that *the Lord God shall give him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever*, Luke i. 33. For

For the confirmation of this it is promiſed, 1. That the *covenant with David* ſhall be as firm as the *ordinances of heaven*; to the ſtability of which, that of God's promiſe is compared, *chap.* xxxi. 35, 36. There is a covenant of nature, by which the common courſe of providence is ſettled, and on which it is founded, here called, *a covenant of the day and the night*, ver. 20, 25. becauſe that is one of the articles of it, that there ſhall be *day and night in their ſeaſon*, according to the diſtinction put between them in the creation, when God divided between the light and the darkneſs, and eſtabliſhed their mutual ſucceſſion, and a government to each, that *the ſun* ſhould *rule by day*, and *the moon and ſtars by night*, Gen. i. 4, 5, 16. which eſtabliſhment was renewed after the flood, *Gen.* viii. 22. and has continued ever ſince, *Pſalm* xix. 2. the *morning and* the *evening* have both of them their regular *outgoings*, Pſalm lxv. 8. the *day-ſpring knows its place, knows its time*, and keeps both, ſo do *the ſhadows of the evening*; and while the world ſtands this courſe ſhall not be altered, this *covenant* ſhall not *be broken: The ordinances of heaven and earth* (of this communication between heaven and earth, the dominion of theſe ordinances of heaven upon the earth) *which* God has *appointed*, ver. 25. (compare *Job* xxxviii. 33.) ſhall never be diſappointed: Thus firm ſhall the covenant of redemption be with the Redeemer, God's ſervant, but David our king, *ver.* 21. This intimates, that Chriſt ſhall have a church on earth to the world's end; he ſhall ſee a ſeed in which he ſhall prolong his days till time and days ſhall be no more: Chriſt's *kingdom is an everlaſting kingdom*, and when *the end cometh*, and not till then, it *ſhall be delivered up to God*, even *the Father:* But it intimates, that the condition of it in this world ſhall be intermixed and counterchanged, proſperity and adverſity ſucceeding each other, as light and darkneſs, day and night: But this is plainly taught us, that as ſure as we may be, that though the ſun will ſet to night, it will riſe again to morrow morning, whether we live to ſee it or no, ſo ſure we may be, that though the kingdom of the Redeemer in the world may for a time be clouded and eclipſed by corruptions and perſecutions, yet it will ſhine forth again, and recover its luſtre in the time appointed. 2. That *the ſeed of David* ſhall be as numerous *as the hoſt of heaven*, i. e. the ſpiritual ſeed of the Meſſiah, that ſhall be born to him by the efficacy of his goſpel, and his Spirit working with it; *from the womb of the morning he ſhall have the dew of their youth*, to be his *willing people*, Pſalm cx. 3. Chriſt's ſeed are not as David's were, his ſucceſſors, but his ſubjects, yet the day is coming when they alſo ſhall reign with him, *ver.* 22. *As the hoſt of heaven cannot be numbred, ſo will I multiply the ſeed of David*, ſo that there ſhall be no danger of the kingdom's being extinct, or extirpated, for want of heirs: The children are numerous, *and if children, then heirs.*

2. The covenant of prieſthood ſhall be ſecured, and the promiſes of that alſo ſhall have their full accompliſhment: This ſeemed likewiſe to be forgotten during the captivity, when there was no altar, no temple ſervice for the prieſts to attend upon; but this alſo ſhall revive: It did ſo; immediately upon their coming back to Jeruſalem, there were prieſts and Levites ready *to offer burnt-offerings*, and to *do ſacrifice continually*, Ezra iii. 2, 3. as is here promiſed, *ver.* 18. But that prieſthood ſoon grew corrupt, *the covenant of Levi* was *profaned*, as appears, *Mal.* ii. 8. and in the deſtruction of Jeruſalem by the Romans it came to a final period; we muſt therefore look elſewhere for the performance of this word, that the covenant with the Levites, the prieſts, God's miniſters, ſhall be as firm, and laſt as long, as the covenant *with the day and the night*. And we find it abundantly performed, 1. In the prieſthood of Chriſt, which ſuperſedes that of Aaron, and is the ſubſtance of that ſhadow. While that great *high-prieſt of our profeſſion* is always appearing *in the preſence of God for us*, preſenting the virtue of his blood by which he made atonement in the incenſe of his interceſſion, it may truly be ſaid, that *the Levites do not want a man before God to offer continually*, Heb. viii. 3. *He is a prieſt for ever.* The covenant of the prieſthood is called *a covenant of peace*, Numb. xxv. 12. of *life and peace*, Mal. ii. 5. Now we are ſure this covenant is not broken, or in the leaſt weakned, while Jeſus Chriſt is himſelf our life and our peace. This covenant of prieſthood is here again and again joined with that of royalty, for Chriſt is a *prieſt upon his throne*, as Melchizedeck. 2. In a ſettled goſpel miniſtry; while there are faithful miniſters to preſide in religious aſſemblies, and to offer up the ſpiritual ſacrifices of prayer and praiſe, *the prieſts the Levites* do not want ſucceſſors; and ſuch as *have obtained a more excellent miniſtry.* The apoſtle makes thoſe *that preach the goſpel* to come in the room of thoſe that *ſerved at the altar*, 1 Cor. ix. 13, 14. 3. In all true believers, who are *a holy prieſthood, a royal prieſthood*, 1 Pet. ii. 5, 9. *who are made to our God kings and prieſts*, Rev. i. 6. they *offer up ſpiritual ſacrifices, acceptable to God*; and themſelves, in the firſt place, *living ſacrifices.* Of theſe Levites, this promiſe here muſt be underſtood, *ver.* 22. that they ſhall be as numerous *as the ſand of the ſea*, the ſame that is promiſed concerning Iſrael in general, *Gen.* xxii. 17. for all God's ſpiritual Iſrael are ſpiritual prieſts, *Rev.* v. 9, 10. and vii. 9, 15.

3. The covenant of peculiarity likewiſe ſhall be ſecured, and the promiſes of that covenant ſhall have their full accompliſhment in the goſpel Iſrael. Obſerve, 1. How this covenant was looked upon as broken during the captivity, *ver.* 24. God asks the prophet, Haſt thou not heard, and doſt *thou not conſider, what this people have ſpoken?* either the enemies of Iſrael, who triumphed in the extirpation of a people that had made ſuch a noiſe in the world, or the unbelieving Iſraelites themſelves, *this people*, among whom thou dwelleſt, they have broken covenant with God, and then quarrel with him, as if he had not dealt faithfully with them: *The two families which the Lord hath choſen*, Iſrael and Judah, whereas they were but one when he choſe them, *he hath even caſt them off: Thus have they deſpiſed my people*, i. e. deſpiſed the privilege of being my people, as if it were a privilege of no value at all: The neighbour nations deſpiſed them as now *no more a nation*, but the ruins of a nation, and looked upon all their honour as laid in the duſt: But, 2. See how firm the covenant ſtands notwithſtanding, as firm as that with day and night; ſooner will God ſuffer day and night to ceaſe, than he will *caſt away the ſeed of Jacob.* This cannot refer to the ſeed of Jacob according to the fleſh, for they are caſt away, but to the Chriſtian church, in which all theſe promiſes were to be lodged, as appears by the apoſtle's diſcourſe, *Rom.* xi. 1, *&c.* Chriſt is that ſeed of David, that is to be perpetual dictator to the ſeed of Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob; and as this people ſhall never want ſuch a King, ſo this King ſhall never want ſuch a people: Chriſtianity ſhall continue in the dominion of Chriſt, and the ſubjection of chriſtians to him, till day and night come to an end: And, as a pledge of this, that promiſe is again repeated, *I will cauſe their captivity to return*, and, having brought them back, *I will have mercy on them.* Whom this promiſe refers to, appears, *Gal.* vi. 16. where all that *walk according to the goſpel rule*, are made to be the *Iſrael of God*, on whom *peace and mercy* ſhall be.

CHAP. XXXIV.

In this chapter we have two meſſages which God ſent by Jeremiah, 1. *One to foretel the fate of Zedekiah king of Judah, that he ſhould fall into the hands of the king of Babylon, that he ſhould live a captive, but ſhould at laſt die in peace in his captivity*, ver. 1,—7. 2. *Another to read the doom both of prince and people for their treacherous dealing with God, in bringing back their ſervants into bondage, whom they had releaſed according to the law, and ſo playing faſt and looſe with God: They had* walked at all adventures *with God*, ver. 8,—11. *and therefore God would* walk at all adventures *with them, in bringing the Chaldean army upon them again, then when they began to hope they were got clear of them*, ver. 12,—22.

1. THE word which came unto Jeremiah from the LORD, (when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and all his army, and all the kingdoms of the earth of his dominion, and all the people fought againſt Jeruſalem, and againſt all the cities thereof) ſaying, 2. Thus ſaith the LORD the God of Iſrael; Go, and ſpeak to Zedekiah king of Judah, and tell him, Thus ſaith the LORD; Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he ſhall burn it with fire. 3. And thou ſhalt not eſcape out of his hand, but ſhalt ſurely be taken, and delivered into his hand, and thine eyes ſhall behold the eyes of the king of Babylon, and he ſhall ſpeak with thee mouth to mouth, and thou ſhalt go to Babylon. 4. Yet hear the word of the LORD, O Zedekiah king of Judah, Thus ſaith the LORD of thee, Thou ſhalt not die by the ſword; 5. *But* thou ſhalt die in peace: and with the burnings of thy fathers the former kings which were before thee, ſo ſhall they burn *odours* for thee, and they will lament thee, *ſaying*, Ah lord: for I have pronounced the word, ſaith the LORD. 6. Then Jeremiah the prophet ſpake all theſe words unto Zedekiah king of Judah in Jeruſalem, 7. When the king of Babylons army fought againſt Jeruſalem, and againſt all the cities of Judah *that were* left, againſt Lachiſh, and againſt Azekah: for theſe defenced cities remained of the cities of Judah.

This prophecy concerning Zedekiah was delivered to Jeremiah, and by him to the parties concerned before he was ſhut up in the priſon, for we find this prediction here made the ground of his commitment, as appears by the recital of ſome paſſages out of it, *chap.* xxxii. 4.

Obſerve, (1.) The time when this meſſage was ſent to Zedekiah; it was when *the king of Babylon*, with all his forces, ſome out of *all the kingdoms of the earth* that were within his juriſdiction, *fought againſt Jeruſalem, and the cities thereof*, ver. 1. deſigning to deſtroy them, having often plundered them: The cities that now remained, and yet held out, are named, *ver.* 7. *Lachiſh and Azekah.* This intimates, that things were now brought to the laſt

extremity, and yet Zedekiah obſtinately ſtood it out, his heart being hardned to his deſtruction.

(2.) The meſſage it ſelf that was ſent him.

1. Here is a threatning of wrath: He is told that again, which he had been often told before, that the city ſhall be taken by the Chaldeans, *and burnt with fire*, ver. 2. that he ſhall himſelf fall into the enemy's hands, ſhall be made a priſoner, ſhall be brought before that furious prince Nebuchadnezzar, and be carried away captive into Babylon, *ver.* 3. yet Ezekiel propheſied that he *ſhould not ſee Babylon*, nor did he, for his eyes were put out, *Ezek.* xii. 13. This Zedekiah brought upon himſelf from God by his other ſins, and from Nebuchadnezzar by his breaking off his faith with him.

2. Here is a mixture of mercy: He ſhall die a captive, but he *ſhall not die by the ſword*, he ſhall die a natural death, *ver.* 4. he ſhall end his days with ſome comfort, *ſhall die in peace*, ver. 5. He never had been one of the worſt of the kings, but we are willing to hope that what evil he had *done in the ſight of the Lord*, he repented of it in his captivity, as Manaſſeh had done, and it was forgiven to him, and, God being reconciled to him, he might truly be ſaid to *die in peace*. Note, A man may die in a priſon, and yet *die in peace*. Nay, he ſhall end his days with ſome reputation, more than one would expect, all things conſidered. He ſhall be buried *with the burnings of his fathers*, i. e. with the reſpects uſually ſhewed to their kings, eſpecially thoſe that had done good in Iſrael. It ſeems in his captivity he had carried himſelf ſo well towards his own people, that they were willing to do him this honour, and towards Nebuchadnezzar, that he ſuffered it to be done. If Zedekiah had continued in his proſperity, perhaps, he would have grown worſe, and would have *departed* at laſt *without being deſired*; but his afflictions wrought ſuch a change in him, that his death was looked upon as a great loſs. It is better live and die penitent in a priſon, than live and die impenitent in a palace. *They will lament thee, ſaying, Ah lord*, an honour which his brother Jehoiakim had not, *chap.* xxii. 18. The Jews ſay, they lamented thus over him, *Alas! Zedekiah is dead, who drunk the dregs of all the ages that went before him*, i. e. who ſuffered for the ſins of his anceſtors, the meaſure of iniquity being filled up in his days. They ſhall thus lament him, *ſaith the Lord, for I have pronounced the word*, and what God hath ſpoken ſhall without fail be made good.

3. Jeremiah's faithfulneſs in delivering this meſſage; though he knew it would be ungrateful to the king, and might prove, as indeed it did, dangerous to himſelf, for he was clapped up for it, yet he *ſpake all theſe words to Zedekiah*, ver. 6. It is a mercy to great men to have thoſe about them that will deal faithfully with them, and tell them the evil conſequences of their evil courſes, that they may reform and live.

8. ¶ *This is* the word that came unto Jeremiah from the LORD, after that the king Zedekiah had made a covenant with all the people which *were* at Jeruſalem, to proclaim liberty unto them; 9. That every man ſhould let his man-ſervant, and every man his maid-ſervant, *being* an Hebrew or an Hebreweſs, go free, that none ſhould ſerve himſelf of them, *to wit*, of a Jew his brother. 10. Now when all the princes, and all the people which had entred into the covenant, heard that every one ſhould let his man-ſervant, and every one his maid-ſervant go free, that none ſhould ſerve themſelves of them any more, then they obeyed and let *them* go. 11. But afterwards they turned and cauſed the ſervants and the handmaids, whom they had let go free, to return, and brought them into ſubjection for ſervants and for handmaids. 12. ¶ Therefore the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah from the LORD, ſaying, 13. Thus ſaith the LORD, the God of Iſrael, I made a covenant with your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the houſe of bondmen, ſaying, 14. At the end of ſeven years, let ye go every man his brother an Hebrew, which hath been ſold unto thee: and when he hath ſerved thee ſix years, thou ſhalt let him go free from thee: but your fathers hearkned not unto me, neither inclined their ear. 15. And ye were now turned, and had done right in my ſight, in proclaiming liberty every man to his neighbour, and ye had made a covenant before me in the houſe which is called by my name. 16. But ye turned and polluted my name, and cauſed every man his ſervant, and every man his handmaid, whom he had ſet at liberty at their pleaſure, to return, and brought them into ſubjection, to be unto you for ſervants and for handmaids. 17. Therefore thus ſaith the LORD, Ye have not hearkned unto me, in proclaiming liberty, every one to his brother, and every man to his neighbour: behold, I proclaim a liberty for you, ſaith the LORD, to the ſword, to the peſtilence, and to the famine, and I will make you to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth. 18. And I will give the men that have tranſgreſſed my covenant, which have not performed the words of the covenant which they had made before me, when they cut the calf in twain, and paſſed between the parts thereof. 19. The princes of Judah, and the princes of Jeruſalem, the eunuchs, and the prieſts, and all the people of the land which paſſed between the parts of the calf, 20. I will even give them into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of them that ſeek their life; and their dead bodies ſhall be for meat unto the fowls of the heaven, and to the beaſts of the earth. 21. And Zedekiah king of Judah, and his princes will I give into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of them that ſeek their life, and into the hand of the king of Babylons army which are gone up from you. 22. Behold, I will command, ſaith the LORD, and cauſe them to return to this city, and they ſhall fight againſt it, and take it, and burn it with fire, and I will make the cities of Judah a deſolation without an inhabitant.

We have here another prophecy upon a particular occaſion, the hiſtory of which we muſt take notice of, as neceſſary to give light to the prophecy.

1. When Jeruſalem was cloſely beſieged by the Chaldean army, the princes and people agreed upon a reformation in one inſtance, and that was concerning their ſervants.

(1.) The law of God was very expreſs, that thoſe of their own nation ſhould not be held in ſervitude above ſeven years, but after they had ſerved one apprenticeſhip, they ſhould be diſcharged, and have their liberty; yea, though they had ſold themſelves into ſervitude for the payment of their debts, or though they were *ſold by the judges* for the puniſhment of their crimes. This difference was put between their brethren and ſtrangers, that thoſe of other nations taken in war, or bought with money, might be held in perpetual ſlavery, they and theirs; but their brethren muſt ſerve but for ſeven years at the longeſt. This God calls the covenant that he had made with them, when he *brought them out of the land of Egypt*, ver. 13, 14. This was the firſt of the judicial laws which God gave them, *Exod.* xxi. 2. and there was good reaſon for that law. 1. God had put honour upon that nation, and he would have them thus to preſerve the honour of it themſelves, and to put a difference between it and other nations. 2. God had brought them out of ſlavery in Egypt, and he would have them thus to expreſs their grateful ſenſe of that favour, by letting thoſe go, to whom their houſes were *houſes of bondage*, as Egypt had been to their fore-fathers: That deliverance is therefore mentioned here, *ver.* 13. as the ground of that law. Note, God's compaſſions towards us, ſhould engage our compaſſions towards our brethren; we muſt releaſe as we are releaſed, forgive as we are forgiven, and relieve as we are relieved. And this is called *a covenant*; for our performance of the duty required, is the condition of the continuance of the favours God hath beſtowed.

(2.) This law they and their fathers had broken; their worldly profit ſwayed more with them than God's command or covenant: When their ſervants had lived ſeven years with them, they underſtood their buſineſs, and how to apply themſelves to it, better than they did when they firſt came to them, and therefore they would then by no means part with them, though God himſelf by his law had made them free. *Your fathers hearkned not to me* in this matter, *ver.* 14. ſo that from the days of their fathers they had been in this treſpaſs; and they thought they might do it becauſe their fathers did it, and their ſervants had by diſuſe loſt the benefit of the proviſion God made for them; whereas againſt an expreſs law, eſpecially againſt an expreſs law of God, no cuſtom, uſage, or preſcription, is to be admitted in plea. For this ſin of theirs and their fathers God now brought them into ſervitude, and juſtly.

(3.) When they were beſieged, and cloſely ſhut in by the army of the Chaldeans, they being told of their fault in this matter, preſently reformed, and let go all their ſervants that were entitled to their freedom by the law of God; as Pharaoh, who, when the plague was upon him, conſented to *let the people go*, and bound themſelves in a covenant to do ſo. (1.) The prophets faithfully admoniſhed them concerning their ſin. From them they heard that they ſhould let their Hebrew ſervants *go free*, ver. 10. They might have read it themſelves in the book of the law, but did not, or did not heed it, therefore the prophets told them what the law was. See what need there is of the preaching of the word; people muſt hear the word preached, becauſe they will not make the uſe they ought to make of the word written. (2.) All orders and degrees of

of men concurred in this reformation. The *king*, and *the princes*, and *all the people* agreed to *let go their ſervants*, whatever loſs or damage they might ſuſtain by ſo doing. When the king and princes led in this good work, the people could not for ſhame but follow. The example and influence of great men would go very far towards extirpating of the moſt inveterate corruptions. (3.) They bound themſelves by a ſolemn oath and covenant that they would do this, whereby they engaged themſelves to God and one another. Note, What God hath bound us to by his precept, it is good for us to bind ourſelves to by our promiſe. This covenant was very ſolemn: it was made in a ſacred place, *made before me, in the houſe which is called by my name*, ver. 15. in the ſpecial preſence of God, the tokens of which, in the temple, ought to ſtrike an awe upon them, and make them very ſincere in their appeals to him. It was ratified by a ſignificant ſign, they *cut a calf in two, and paſſed between the parts thereof*, ver. 18, 19. with this dreadful imprecation, Let us be in like manner cut in ſunder, if we do not perform what we now promiſe: And this calf was probably offered up in ſacrifice to God, who was thereby made a party to the covenant. When God covenanted with Abram, for the ratification of it, a *ſmoking furnace* and a *burning lamp paſſed between the pieces* of the ſacrifice, in alluſion to this federal rite, *Gen.* xv. 17. Note, That we may effectually oblige ourſelves to our duty, it is good to frighten ourſelves with the apprehenſions of the terror of that wrath and curſe to which we expoſe ourſelves, if we live in the contempt of it, that wrath which will *cut ſinners aſunder*, Mat. xxiv. 51. and ſenſible ſigns may be of uſe to make the impreſſions of it deep and durable, as here. (4.) They conformed themſelves herein to the command of God, and their covenant with him; they did *let their ſervants go*, though at this time, when the city was beſieged, they could very ill ſpare them. Thus they did *right in God's ſight*, ver. 15. Though it was their trouble that drove them to it, yet he was well pleaſed with it, and if they had perſervered in this act of *mercy to the poor*, to their poor ſervants, it might have been a lengthening of their tranquillity, *Dan.* iv. 27.

2. When there was ſome hope that the ſiege was raiſed, and the danger over, they repented of their repentance, undid the good they had done, and forced the ſervants they had releaſed into their reſpective ſervices again. (1.) The *king of Babylon's army was* now *gone up from them*, ver. 21. Pharaoh was bringing an army of Egyptians to oppoſe the progreſs of the king of Babylon's victories, upon the tidings of which the Chaldeans raiſed the ſiege for a time, as we find, *chap.* xxxvii. 5. *They departed from Jeruſalem.* See how ready God was to put a ſtop to his judgments, upon the firſt inſtance of reformation, ſo ſlow is he to anger, and ſo ſwift to ſhew mercy. As ſoon as ever they let their ſervants go free, God let them go free. (2.) When they began to think themſelves ſafe from the beſiegers, they made their ſervants come back into ſubjection to them, *ver.* 11. and again, *ver.* 16. This was a great abuſe to their ſervants, to whom ſervitude would be more irkſome, after they had had ſome taſte of the pleaſures of liberty. It was a great ſhame to themſelves, that they could not keep in a good mind when they were in it: But it was eſpecially an affront to God; in doing this they *polluted his name*, ver. 16. It was a contempt of the command he had given them, as if that were of no force at all, but they might either keep it or break it as they thought fit. It was a contempt of the covenant they had made with him, and of that wrath which they imprecated upon themſelves, in caſe they ſhould break that covenant. It was jeſting with God almighty, as if he could be impoſed upon by fallacious promiſes, which, when they had gained their point, they would look upon themſelves no longer obliged by. It was *lying to God with their mouths*, and *flattering him with their tongues.* It was likewiſe a contempt of the judgments of God, and ſetting them at defiance; as if when once the courſe of them was ſtopped a little, and interrupted, they would never proceed again, and the judgment would never be revived: Whereas reprieves are ſo far from being pardons, that if they be abuſed thus, and ſinners take encouragement from them to return to ſin, they are but preparatives for heavier ſtrokes of divine vengeance.

3. For this treacherous dealing with God they are here ſeverely threatned. *Be not deceived, God is not mocked*; thoſe that think to put a cheat upon God by diſſembled repentance, a fallacious covenant, and a partial temporary reformation, will prove in the end to have put the greateſt cheat upon their own ſouls: For *the Lord, whoſe name is jealous, is a jealous God.* It is here threatned with an obſervable air of diſpleaſure againſt them, (1.) That ſince they had not given liberty to their ſervants to go where they pleaſed, God would give all his judgments liberty to take their courſe againſt them, without controll, *ver.* 17. *You have not proclaimed liberty to your ſervants.* Though they had *done it*, ver. 10. yet they might truly be ſaid not to have done it, becauſe they did not ſtand to it, but undid it again; and *factum non dicitur quod non perſeverat.* The righteouſneſs that is forſaken, and turned away from ſhall be forgotten, and *not mentioned*, no more than if it had never been, *Ezek.* xviii. 24. therefore *I will proclaim a liberty for you*, i. e. I will diſcharge you from my ſervice, and put you out of my protection, which thoſe forfeit that withdraw from their allegiance: you ſhall have liberty to chooſe which of theſe judgments you will be cut off by, *ſword, famine, or peſtilence*; ſuch a liberty as was offered to David, which put him into a *great ſtrait*, 2 Sam. xxiv. 14. Note, Thoſe that will not be in ſubjection to the law of God, put themſelves into ſubjection to the wrath and curſe of God. But this ſhews what *liberty to ſin* really is, it is but a liberty to the ſoreſt judgments. (2.) That ſince they had brought their ſervants back into confinement in their houſes, God would *make them to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth*, where they ſhould live in ſervitude, and being ſtrangers could not expect the privileges of freeborn ſubjects. (3.) That ſince they had broken the covenant which they ratified by a ſolemn imprecation, God would bring on them the evil which they imprecated upon themſelves, in caſe they ſhould break it. Out of their own mouth will he judge them, and ſo ſhall their doom be; the penalty of their bond ſhall be recovered, becauſe they have not performed the condition; for ſo ſome read, *ver.* 18. *I will make the men which have tranſgreſſed my covenant, as the calf which they cut in twain*; I will divide them in ſunder, as they divided it in ſunder. (4.) That ſince they would not let go their ſervants out of their hands, God would deliver them into the hands of thoſe that hated them. Even the princes and nobles, both of Judah and Jeruſalem, of the country and of the city; the eunuchs, chamberlains, or great officers of the court, the prieſts, and all the people, they had all dealt treacherouſly with God, and therefore ſhall all be involved in the common ruin, without exception, *ver.* 19. they ſhall all be *given into the hand of their enemies, that ſeek*, not their wealth only, or their ſervice, but *their life:* And they ſhall have what they ſeek; but neither ſhall that content them, when they have their lives, they ſhall leave *their dead bodies* unburied, a loathſome ſpectacle to all mankind, and an eaſy prey to the fowls and beaſts, a laſting mark of ignominy being here faſtened on them. (5.) That ſince they had emboldened themſelves in returning to their ſin, contrary to their covenant, by the retreat of the Chaldean army from them, God would therefore bring it upon them again. They are now *gone up from you*, and your fright is over for the preſent, but I *will command them* to face about as they were; they ſhall return to this city, and *take* it, and *burn* it. Note, 1. As confidence in God is a hopeful preſage of approaching deliverance, ſo ſecurity in ſin is a ſad omen of approaching deſtruction. 2. When judgments are removed from a people before they have done their work, leave them, but leave them unhumbled and unreformed, (it is *cum animo revertendi*) they do but retreat to come on again with ſo much the greater force; for when God judgeth, he will overcome. 3. It is juſt with God to diſappoint thoſe expectations of mercy which his providence had given cauſe for, when we diſappoint thoſe expectations of duty, which our profeſſions, pretenſions and fair promiſes had given cauſe for. If we repent of the good we had purpoſed, God will *repent of the good he had purpoſed. With the froward, thou wilt ſhew thyſelf froward.*

CHAP. XXXV.

A variety of methods is tried, and every ſtone turned, to awaken the Jews to a ſenſe of their ſin, and to bring them to repentance and reformation. The ſcope and tendency of many of the prophet's ſermons was to frighten them out of their diſobedience, by ſetting before them what would be the end thereof, if they perſiſted in it. The ſcope of this ſermon in this chapter is to ſhame them out of their diſobedience, if they had any ſenſe of honour left in them, for a diſcourſe of this nature to faſten upon; (1.) He ſets before them the obedience of the family of the Rechabites to the commands which were left them by Jonadab their anceſtor, and how they perſevered in that obedience, and would not be tempted from it, ver. 1,—11. *(2.) With this he aggravates the diſobedience of the Jews to God, and their contempt of his precepts,* ver. 12,—15. *(3.) He foretels the judgments of God upon the Jews for their impious diſobedience to God,* ver. 16, 17. *(4.) He aſſures the Rechabites of the bleſſing of God upon them, for their pious obedience to their father,* ver. 18, 19.

1. THE word which came unto Jeremiah from the LORD, in the days of Jehoiakim, the ſon of Joſiah king of Judah, ſaying, 2. Go unto the houſe of the Rechabites, and ſpeak unto them, and bring them into the houſe of the LORD, into one of the chambers, and give them wine to drink. 3. Then I took Jaazaniah, the ſon of Jeremiah, the ſon of Habaziniah, and his brethren, and all his ſons, and the whole houſe of the Rechabites. 4 And I brought them into the houſe of the LORD, into the chamber of the ſons of Hanan, the ſon of Igdaliah a man of God, which *was* by the chamber of the princes, which *was* above the chamber of Maaſeiah the ſon of Shallum, the keeper of the door. 5. And I ſet before the ſons of the houſe of the Rechabites pots full of wine, and cups, and I ſaid unto them, Drink ye wine. 6. But they ſaid, We will drink no wine: for Jonadab the ſon of Rechab our father commanded us, ſaying, Ye ſhall drink no wine, *neither* ye, nor your ſons for ever. 7. Neither ſhall ye build houſe, nor ſow ſeed, nor plant vineyard, nor have *any*: but all

all your days ye shall dwell in tents, that ye may live many days in the land where ye *be* strangers. 8. Thus have we obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab our father, in all that he hath charged us, to drink no wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons nor our daughters; 9. Nor to build houses for us to dwell in: neither have we vineyard, nor field, nor seed. 10. But we have dwelt in tents, and have obeyed, and done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us. 11. But it came to pass when Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon came up into the land, that we said, Come, and let us go to Jerusalem for fear of the army of the Chaldeans, and for fear of the army of the Syrians: so we dwell at Jerusalem.

This chapter is of an earlier date than many of those before; for what is contained in it was said and done *in the days of Jehoiakim*, ver. 1. but then it must be in the latter part of his reign, for it was after the king of Babylon with his army *came up into the land*, ver. 11. which seems to refer to the invasion mentioned, 2 *Kings* xxiv. 2. which was upon occasion of Jehoiakim's rebelling against Nebuchadnezzar. After the judgments of God had broke in upon this rebellious people, he continued to deal with them by his prophets to turn them from sin, that his wrath might turn away from them. He endeavours it by the example of the Rechabites, a family that kept distinct by themselves, and were no more numbered with the families of Israel, than they with the nations. They were originally Kenites, as appears, 1 *Chron.* ii. 55. *These are the Kenites that came out of Hemath, the father of the house of Rechab.* The Kenites, at least those of them that gained a settlement in the land of Israel, were of the posterity of Hobab, Moses's father-in-law, *Judges* i. 16. We find them separated from the Amalekites, 1 *Sam.* xv. 6. See *Judges* iv. 17. One family of these Kenites had their denomination from Rechab; his son, or a lineal descendant from him, was Jonabab, a man famous in his time for wisdom and piety. He flourished in the days of Jehu, king of Israel, near 300 years before this; for there we find him courted by that rising prince, when he affected to appear zealous for God, 2 *Kings* x. 15, 16. which he thought nothing more likely to confirm people in the opinion of, than to have so good a man as Jonadab ride in the chariot with him. Now here we are told,

1. What the rules of living were, which Jonadab, probably by his last will and testament in writing, and duly executed, charged his children, and his posterity after him, throughout all generations, religiously to observe; and we have reason to think, they were such as he himself had all his days observed. (1.) He forbad them to *drink wine*, according to the law of the Nazarites. Wine is indeed given to *make glad the heart* of man; and we are allowed the sober and moderate use of it; but we are so apt to abuse it, and get hurt by it, and a good man that has his heart made continually glad with the *light of God's countenance*, hath so little need of it for that purpose, *(Psal.* iv. 6, 7.) that it is a commendable piece of self-denial, either not to use it at all, or very sparingly, and medicinally, as Timothy used it, 1 *Tim.* v. 23. (2.) He appointed them to *dwell in tents*, and not to build houses, or purchase lands, or rent or occupy either, *ver.* 7. This was an instance of strictness and mortification beyond what the Nazarites were obliged to. Tents were mean dwellings, so that this would teach them to be humble; they were cold dwellings, so that this would teach them to be hardy, and not to indulge the body; they were moveable dwellings, so that this would teach them not to think of settling or taking root any where in this world. They must dwell in tents *all their days*, not for a few days, as Israel at the feast of tabernacles, not only in summer-days, as soldiers and shepherds, but *all their days*. They must from the beginning thus accustom themselves to endure hardness, and then it would be no difficulty to them, no not under the decays of old age.

Now why did Jonadab prescribe these rules of living to his posterity? It was not meerly to shew his authority, and to exercise a dominion over them, by imposing upon them what he thought fit: but it was to shew his wisdom, and the real concern he had for their welfare, by recommending to them what he knew would be beneficial to them; yet not tying them by any oath or vow, or under any penalty, to observe these rules, but only advising them to conform to this discipline, as far as they found it for edification, yet to be dispensed with in any case of necessity, as here, *ver.* 11. He prescribed these rules to them, (1.) That they might preserve the ancient character of their family, which, however looked upon by some with contempt, he thought its real reputation. His ancestors had addicted themselves to a pastoral life, *Exod.* ii. 16. and he would have his posterity keep to it, and not degenerate from it, as Israel had done, who originally were shepherds, and dwelt in tents, *Gen.* xlvi. 34. Note, We ought not to be ashamed of the honest employments of our ancestors, though they were but mean. (2.) That they might comport with their lot, and bring their mind to their condition, Moses had put them in hopes that they should be naturalized, *Numb.* x. 32. but it seems they were not, they were still *strangers in the land*, ver. 7. had no inheritance in it, and therefore must live by their employments, which was a good reason why they should accustom themselves to hard fare and hard lodging; for strangers, such as they were, must not expect to live as the landed men, so plentifully and delicately. Note, It is our wisdom and duty to accommodate ourselves to our place and rank, and not aim to live above it. What has been the lot of our fathers, why may we not be content that it should be our lot, and live according to it? *Mind not high things.* (3.) That they might not be envied and disturbed by their neighbours among whom they lived. If they that were strangers should live great, raise estates, and fare sumptuously, the natives would grudge them their abundance, and have a jealous eye upon them, as the Philistines had upon Isaac, *Gen.* xxvi. 14. and would seek occasions to quarrel with them, and do them a mischief; therefore he thought it would be their prudence to keep low, for that would be the way to continue long; to live meanly, that they might *live many days in the land where they were strangers.* Note, Humility and contentment in obscurity is oftentimes the best policy, and mens surest protection. (4.) That they might be armed against temptations to luxury and sensuality, the prevailing sin of the age and place they lived in. Jonadab saw a general corruption of manners; the drunkards of Ephraim abounded, and he was afraid lest his children should be debauched and ruined by them, and therefore obliged them to live by themselves, retired in the country; and that they might not run into any unlawful pleasures, to deny themselves the use even of lawful delights. They must be very sober, and temperate, and abstemious, which would contribute to the health both of mind and body, and to their living many days, and easy ones, and such as they might reflect upon with comfort *in the land where they were strangers.* Note, The consideration of this, that we are strangers and pilgrims, should oblige us to abstain from all fleshly lusts, to live above the things of sense, and look upon them with a generous and gracious contempt. (5.) That they might be prepared for times of trouble and calamity. Jonadab might, without a spirit of prophecy, foresee the destruction of a people so wretchedly degenerated, and he would have his family provide, that if they could not *in the peace thereof*, yet even in the midst of the troubles thereof, *they might have peace.* Let them therefore have little to lose, and then losing times would be the less dreadful to them: let them sit loose to what they had, and then they might the easier be stript of it. Note, Those are in the best frame to meet sufferings, that are mortified to the world, and live a life of self-denial. (6.) That in general they might learn to live by rule, and under discipline. It is good for us all to do so, and teach our children to do so. Those that have lived long, as it is likely Jonadab had done, when he left this charge to his posterity, can speak by experience of the vanity of the world, and the dangerous snares that are in the abundance of its wealth and pleasures, and therefore ought to be regarded, when they warn those that come after them to stand upon their guard.

2. We are here told how strictly his posterity observed these rules, *ver.* 8, 9, 10. They had in their respective generations all of them *obeyed the voice of Jonadab their father*, had *done according to all that he commanded them.* They *drank no wine*, though they dwelt in a country where there was plenty of it; their wives and children *drank no wine*, for they that are temperate themselves should take care that all under their charge should be so too. They built no houses, tilled no ground, but lived upon the products of their cattle. This they did partly in obedience to their ancestor, and out of a veneration they had for his name and authority, and partly from the experience they themselves had of the benefit of living such a mortified life. See the force of tradition, and the influence that antiquity, example, and great names, have upon men, and how that which seems very difficult will by long usage and custom become easy, and in a manner natural.

Now, (1.) As to one of the particulars he had given them in charge, we are here told how in a case of necessity they dispensed with the violation of it, *ver.* 11. *When the king of Babylon came into the land*, with his army, though they had hitherto dwelt in tents, they now quitted their tents, and came and dwelt in Jerusalem, and in such houses as they could furnish themselves with there. Note, The rules of a strict discipline must not be made too strict, but so as to admit of a dispensation when the necessity of the case calls for it; which therefore in making vows of that nature, it is wisdom to provide expresly for, that the way may be made the more clear, and we may not afterwards be forced to say, *It was an error*, Eccles. v. 6. and commands of that nature are to be understood with such limitations. These Rechabites had tempted God, and not trusted him, if they had not used proper means for their own safety in a time of common calamity, notwithstanding the law and custom of their family. (2.) As to the other particular, we are here told how, notwithstanding the greater urgency, they religiously adhered to it. Jeremiah took them into the temple, *ver.* 2. into a *prophet's chamber* there, rather than into the *chamber of the princes* that joined to it, because he had a message from God, which would look more like itself, when it was delivered in the *chambers of a man of God.* There he not only asked the Rechabites, Would they drink any wine, but he set *pots full of wine before them*, and cups to drink out of, made the temptation as strong as possible, and said, *Drink ye wine*, ye shall have it on free

free coſt; you have broken one of the rules of your order, in coming to live at Jeruſalem, why may you not break this too; and when you are in the city, do as they there do? But they peremptorily refuſed, they all agreed in the refuſal; No, *we will drink no wine*; for with us it is againſt the law. The prophet knew very well they would deny it, and when they did, urged it no further, for he ſaw that they were ſtedfaſtly reſolved. Note, Thoſe temptations are of no force with men of confirmed ſobriety, which yet daily overcome ſuch as, notwithſtanding their convictions, are of no reſolution in the paths of virtue.

12. ¶ Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah, ſaying, 13. Thus ſaith the LORD of hoſts, the God of Iſrael, Go, and tell the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jeruſalem, Will ye not receive inſtruction to hearken to my words? ſaith the LORD. 14. The words of Jonadab the ſon of Rechab, that he commanded his ſons not to drink wine, are performed; for unto this day they drink none, but obey their fathers commandment: notwithſtanding I have ſpoken unto you, riſing early, and ſpeaking, but ye hearkned not unto me. 15. I have ſent alſo unto you all my ſervants the prophets, riſing up early and ſending *them*, ſaying, Return ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings, and go not after other gods to ſerve them, and ye ſhall dwell in the land, which I have given to you, and to your fathers: but ye have not inclined your ear, nor hearkned unto me. 16. Becauſe the ſons of Jonadab the ſon of Rechab, have performed the commandment of their father, which he commanded them; but this people hath not hearkned unto me: 17. Therefore thus ſaith the LORD God of hoſts, the God of Iſrael, Behold, I will bring upon Judah, and upon all the inhabitants of Jeruſalem, all the evil that I have pronounced againſt them: becauſe I have ſpoken unto them, but they have not heard, and I have called unto them, but they have not anſwered. 18. ¶ And Jeremiah ſaid unto the houſe of the Rechabites, Thus ſaith the LORD of hoſts, the God of Iſrael, Becauſe ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according to all that he hath commanded you: 19. Therefore thus ſaith the LORD of hoſts, the God of Iſrael, Jonadab the ſon of Rechab ſhall not want a man to ſtand before me for ever.

The trial of the Rechabites conſtancy was intended but for a ſign, now here we have the application of it.

1. The Rechabites obſervance of their father's charge to them, is made uſe of as an aggravation of the diſobedience of the Jews to God: Let them ſee it, and be aſhamed. The prophet asks them in God's name, *Will ye not* at length *receive inſtruction?* ver. 13. Will nothing affect you? Will nothing faſten upon you? Will nothing prevail to diſcover ſin and duty to you? You ſee how obedient the Rechabites are to their father's commandment, *ver.* 14. but *you have not inclined your ear to me*, ver. 15. though one might much more reaſonably expect, that the people of God ſhould have obeyed him, than that the ſons of Jonadab ſhould have obeyed him; and the aggravation is very high, for, (1.) The Rechabites were obedient to one that was but a man like themſelves, that had but the wiſdom and power of a man, and was only the father of their fleſh; but the Jews were diſobedient to an infinite and eternal God, that had an abſolute authority over them as the father of their ſpirits. (2.) Jonadab was long ſince dead, and was ignorant of them, and could neither take cognizance of their diſobedience to his orders, nor give correction for it; but God lives for ever, to ſee how his laws are obſerved, and is in a readineſs to revenge all diſobedience. (3.) The Rechabites were never put in mind of their obligations to their father; but God often ſent his prophets to his people, to put them in mind of their duty to him, and yet they would not do it: This is inſiſted on here as a great aggravation of their diſobedience, *I have* myſelf *ſpoken to you, riſing early, and ſpeaking*, by the written word, and the dictates and admonitions of conſcience, *ver.* 14. Nay, *I have ſent unto you all my ſervants the prophets*, men like yourſelves, whoſe terrors ſhall not make you afraid, *riſing up early, and ſending them*, ver. 15. and yet all in vain. (4.) Jonadab never did that for his ſeed that God had done for this people; he left them a charge, but left them no eſtate to bear the charge; but God had given his people a *good land*, and promiſed them, if they would be obedient, they ſhould ſtill dwell in it: ſo that they were bound both in gratitude and intereſt to be obedient, and yet they *would not hear*, they would not *hearken*. (5.) God did not tie up his people to ſo much hardſhip, and to ſuch inſtances of mortification, as Jonadab obliged his ſeed to; and yet Jonadab's orders were obeyed, and God's were not.

2. Judgments are threatned, as often before, againſt Judah and Jeruſalem, for their diſobedience thus aggravated. The Rechabites ſhall riſe up in judgment againſt them, and ſhall condemn them; for they very punctually *performed the commandment of their father*, and continued and perſevered in their obedience to it, *ver.* 16. but *this people*, this rebellious and gainſaying people, *has not hearkned unto me*; and therefore, *ver.* 17. becauſe they have not obeyed the precepts of the word, God will perform the threatnings of it, *I will bring upon them*, by the Chaldean army, *all the evil pronounced againſt them*, both in the law and in the prophets, for *I have ſpoken to them, I have called to them*; ſpoken in a ſtill ſmall voice to them that were near, and called aloud to them that were at a diſtance; tried all ways and means to convince and reduce them; ſpoke by his word, called by his providence, both to the ſame purpoſe, and yet all to no purpoſe; they have not *heard*, nor *anſwered*.

3. Mercy is here promiſed to the family of the Rechabites, for their ſteady and unanimous adherence to the laws of their houſe; though it was only for the ſhaming of Iſrael that their conſtancy was tried; yet being unſhaken, it was *found unto praiſe, and honour and glory:* And God takes occaſion from it to tell them, that he had favours in reſerve for them, *ver.* 18, 19. and they ſhould have the comfort of them. It is promiſed, (1.) That the family ſhall continue as long as any of the families of Iſrael, among whom they were ſtrangers and ſojourners. It ſhall *never want a man* to inherit what they had, though they had no inheritance to leave them. Note, Sometimes thoſe that have the ſmalleſt eſtates have the moſt numerous progeny: but he that ſends mouths, will be ſure to ſend meat. (2.) That religion ſhall continue in the family; *He ſhall not want a man to ſtand before me*, to ſerve me. Though they are neither prieſts nor Levites, nor appear to have had any poſt in the temple ſervice, yet in a conſtant courſe of regular devotion they *ſtand before* God, to miniſter to him. Note, 1. The greateſt bleſſing that can be entailed upon a family, is to have the worſhip of God kept up in it, from generation to generation. 2. Temperance and ſelf-denial, and mortification to the world, do very much befriend the exerciſes of piety, and help to tranſmit the obſervance of them to poſterity. The more dead we are to the delights of ſenſe, the better we are diſpoſed for the ſervice of God; but nothing is more fatal to the entail of religion in a family than pride and luxury.

CHAP. XXXVI.

Here is another expedient tried to work upon this heedleſs and untoward people, but it is tried in vain. A roll of a book is provided, containing an abſtract or abridgment of all the ſermons that Jeremiah had preached to them, that they might be put in mind of what they had heard, and might the better underſtand it, when they had it all before them at one view. Now here we have, (1.) The writing of this roll by Baruch, as Jeremiah dictated it, ver. 1,—4. *(2.) The reading of the roll by Baruch to all the people publickly on a faſt-day,* ver. 5,—10. *afterwards by Baruch to the princes privately,* ver. 11,—19. *and, laſtly, by Jehudi to the king,* ver. 20, 21. *(3.) The burning of the roll by the king, with orders to proſecute Jeremiah and Baruch,* ver. 22,—26. *(4.) The writing of another roll, with large additions, particularly of Jehoiakim's doom for burning the former,* ver. 27,—32.

1. AND it came to paſs in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, the ſon of Joſiah king of Judah, *that* this word came unto Jeremiah from the LORD, ſaying, 2. Take thee a roll of a book, and write therein all the words that I have ſpoken unto thee againſt Iſrael, and againſt Judah, and againſt all the nations, from the day I ſpake unto thee, from the days of Joſiah even unto this day. 3. It may be that the houſe of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpoſe to do unto them; that they may return every man from his evil way, that I may forgive their iniquity and their ſin. 4. Then Jeremiah called Baruch the ſon of Neriah; and Baruch wrote from the mouth of Jeremiah, all the words of the LORD, which he had ſpoken unto him, upon a roll of a book. 5. And Jeremiah commanded Baruch, ſaying, I *am* ſhut up, I cannot go into the houſe of the LORD: 6. Therefore go thou and read in the roll, which thou haſt written from my mouth, the words of the LORD, in the ears of the people, in the LORDs houſe upon the faſting-day: and alſo thou ſhalt read them in the ears of all Judah, that come out of their cities. 7. It may be they will preſent

ſent their ſupplication before the LORD, and will return every one from his evil way; for great *is* the anger and the fury that the LORD hath pronounced againſt this people. 8. And Baruch the ſon of Neriah did according to all that Jeremiah the prophet commanded him, reading in the book the words of the LORD, in the LORDs houſe.

In the beginning of Ezekiel's prophecy, we meet with *a roll written in viſion*, for diſcovery of the things therein contained to the prophet himſelf, who was to receive and digeſt them, *Ezek.* ii. 10. and iii. 1. Here, in the latter end of Jeremiah's prophecy, we meet with *a roll*, written in fact, for diſcovery of the things contained therein to the people, who were to hear and give heed to them; for the written word, and other good books, are of great uſe both to miniſters and people. We have here,

1. The command which God gave to Jeremiah, to write a ſummary of his ſermons, of all the reproofs and all the warnings he had given in God's name to his people, ever ſince he firſt began to be a preacher, in the 13th year of Joſiah, to *this day*, which was in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, *ver.* 2, 3. What had been ſpoken only muſt now be written, that it might be reviewed, and that it might ſpread the further, and laſt the longer. What had been ſpoken at large, with frequent repetitions of the ſame things, perhaps in the ſame words, which has its advantage one way, muſt now be contracted, and put into leſs compaſs, that the ſeveral parts of it might be better compared together, which has its advantage another way. What they had heard once muſt be recapitulated, and rehearſed to them again, that what was forgotten might be called to mind again, and what made no impreſſion upon them at the firſt hearing, might take hold of them when they heard it the ſecond time. And what was perhaps already written and publiſhed in ſingle ſermons, muſt be collected into one volume, that none might be loſt. Note, The writing of the ſcripture is by divine appointment: And obſerve, The reaſon here given for the writing of this roll, *ver.* 3. *It may be the houſe of Judah will hear.* Not that the divine preſcience was at any uncertainty concerning the event, with that there is no peradventure; God knew certainly *that they would deal very treacherouſly*, Iſa. xlviii. 8. But the divine wiſdom directed to this as a proper means for attaining the deſired end, which, if it did not, they would be the more inexcuſable. And though God foreſaw they would not hear, he did not tell the prophet ſo, but preſcribes this method to him as a probable one, to be uſed, in hopes they *will hear*; *will hear*, that is, will heed and regard what they hear, will take notice of it, and mix faith with it: for, otherwiſe our hearing of the word, though an angel from heaven were to read or preach it unto us, would ſtand us in no ſtead. Now obſerve here, (1.) What it is hoped they will thus hear, *All that evil which I purpoſe to do unto them.* Note, The ſerious conſideration of the certain fatal conſequences of ſin, will be of great uſe to us to bring us to God. (2.) What it is hoped will be produced thereby, *They will hear, that they may return every man from his evil way.* Note, The converſion of ſinners from their evil courſes, is that which miniſters ſhould aim at in preaching, and people hear the word in vain, if that point be not gained with them. To what purpoſe do we hear of the evil God will bring upon us for ſin, if we continue notwithſtanding to do evil againſt him? (3.) Of what vaſt advantage their conſideration and converſion will be to them; *that I may forgive their iniquity.* This plainly implies the honour of God's juſtice, with which it is not conſiſtent that he ſhould forgive the ſin, unleſs the ſinner repent of it, and turn from it; but it plainly expreſſeth the honour of his mercy, that he is very ready to forgive ſin, and only waits till the ſinner be qualified to receive forgiveneſs; and therefore uſeth various means to bring us to repentance, *that he may forgive.*

2. The inſtructions which Jeremiah gave to Baruch his ſcribe, purſuant to this command he had received from God, and the writing of the roll accordingly, *ver.* 4. God bid Jeremiah write, but it ſhould ſeem he had not the *pen of a ready writer*, he could not write faſt, or not fair, ſo as Baruch could, and therefore he made uſe of him as his amanuenſis. St. Paul wrote but few of his epiſtles with his own hand, *Gal.* vi. 11. *Rom.* xvi. 22. God diſpenſeth his gifts variouſly; ſome have a good faculty at ſpeaking, others at writing, and neither can ſay to the other, We have *no need of you*, 1 Cor. xii. 21. The Spirit of God dictated to Jeremiah, and he to Baruch, who had been employed by Jeremiah as truſtee for him in his purchaſe of the field, *chap.* xxxii. 12. and now was advanced to be his ſcribe, and ſubſtitute in his prophetical office; and, if we may credit the Apocryphal book, that bears his name, he was afterwards himſelf a prophet to the captives in Babylon. Thoſe that begin low, are likely to riſe high, and it is good for thoſe that are deſigned for prophets, to have their education under prophets, and be ſerviceable to them. Baruch wrote what Jeremiah dictated in a *roll of a book*, on pieces of parchment or vellum, which were joined together, the top of one to the bottom of the other, ſo making one long ſcroll, which was rolled perhaps upon a ſtaff.

3. The orders which Jeremiah gave to Baruch, to read what he had written to the people. Jeremiah, it ſeems, was *ſhut up*, and *could not go to the houſe of the Lord* himſelf, *ver.* 5. though he was not a cloſe priſoner, for then there had been no occaſion to ſend officers to ſeize him, *ver.* 26. yet he was forbidden by the king to appear in the temple, was ſhut out thence, where he might be ſerving God, and doing good, which was as bad to him as if he had been ſhut up in a dungeon. Jehoiakim was ripening apace for ruin when he thus ſilenced God's faithful meſſengers. But when Jeremiah could not go to the temple himſelf, he ſent one that was deputed by him, to read to the people what he would himſelf have ſaid. Thus St. Paul wrote epiſtles to the churches, which he could not viſit in perſon. Nay, it was what he himſelf had often ſaid to them. Note, The writing and repeating of the ſermons that have been preached, may contribute very much towards the anſwering of the great ends of preaching. What we have heard and known, it is good for us to hear again, that we may know it better. To preach and write the ſame thing is ſafe and profitable, and many times very neceſſary, *Phil.* iii. 1. and we muſt be glad to hear a good word from God, though we have it as here at ſecond hand. Both miniſters and people muſt do what they can, when they cannot do what they would. Obſerve, When God ordered the reading of the roll, he ſaid, *It may be they will hear, and return from their evil ways*, ver. 3. When Jeremiah orders it, he ſaith, *It may be they will pray*, (they will *preſent their ſupplication before the Lord*) and will *return from their evil way.* Note, Prayer to God for grace to turn us is neceſſary, in order to our turning; and thoſe that are convinced by the word of God of the neceſſity of returning to him, will preſent their ſupplications to him for that grace. And the conſideration of this, that *great is the anger which God has pronounced againſt us* for ſin, ſhould quicken both our prayers and our endeavours. Now according to theſe orders, Baruch did read *out of the book the words of the Lord*, whenever there was a *holy convocation*, ver. 8.

9. And it came to paſs in the fifth year of Jehoiakim the ſon of Joſiah king of Judah, in the ninth month, *that* they proclaimed a faſt before the LORD to all the people in Jeruſalem, and to all the people that came from the cities of Judah unto Jeruſalem. 10. Then read Baruch in the book, the words of Jeremiah in the houſe of the LORD, in the chamber of Gemariah, the ſon of Shaphan the ſcribe, in the higher court, at the entry of the new gate of the LORDs houſe in the ears of all the people. 11. ¶ When Michaiah the ſon of Gemariah the ſon of Shaphan, had heard out of the book all the words of the LORD, 12. Then he went down into the kings houſe into the ſcribes chamber, and lo, all the princes ſat there, *even* Eliſhama the ſcribe, and Delaiah the ſon of Shemaiah, and Elnathan the ſon of Achbor, and Gemariah the ſon of Shaphan, and Zedekiah the ſon of Hananiah, and all the princes. 13. Then Michaiah declared unto them all the words that he had heard when Baruch read the book in the ears of the people. 14. Therefore all the princes ſent Jehudi the ſon of Nethaniah, the ſon of Shelemiah, the ſon of Cuſhi, unto Baruch, ſaying, Take in thine hand the roll wherein thou haſt read in the ears of the people, and come. So Baruch the ſon of Neriah took the roll in his hand, and came unto them. 15. And they ſaid unto him, Sit down now, and read it in our ears. So Baruch read *it* in their ears. 16. Now it came to paſs when they had heard all the words, they were afraid both one and other, and ſaid unto Baruch, We will ſurely tell the king of all theſe words. 17. And they asked Baruch, ſaying, Tell us now, How didſt thou write all theſe words at his mouth? 18. Then Baruch anſwered them, He pronounced all theſe words unto me with his mouth, and I wrote *them* with ink in the book. 19. Then ſaid the princes unto Baruch, Go hide thee, thou and Jeremiah, and let no man know where ye *be.*

It ſhould ſeem that Baruch had been frequently reading out of the book, to all companies that would give him the hearing, before the moſt ſolemn reading of it all together, which is here ſpoken of; for the directions were given about it in *the fourth year of Jehoiakim*, whereas this was done *in the fifth year*, ver. 9. But ſome think, that the writing of the book fair over took up ſo much time, that it was another year ere it was perfected; and yet, perhaps, it might not be paſt a month or two, he might begin it in the latter end of the fourth year, and finiſh it in the beginning of the fifth, for *the ninth month* refers to the computation of the year in general, not to the year of that reign. Now obſerve here,

1. The

1. The government appointed a publick faſt to be religiouſly obſerved, *ver.* 9. either upon the account of the diſtreſs they were brought into by the army of the Chaldeans, or of the want of rain, *chap.* xiv. 1. *They proclaimed a faſt to the people*; whether the king, and princes, or the prieſts ordered this faſt, is not certain, but it was plain God by his providence called them aloud to it. Note, Great ſhews of piety and devotion may be found even among thoſe, who, though they keep up theſe *forms of godlineſs*, are ſtrangers and enemies to *the power* of it. But what will ſuch hypocritical ſervices avail? Faſting without reforming, and turning away from ſin, will never turn away the judgments of God, *Jonah* iii. 10. Notwithſtanding this faſt, God proceeded in his controverſy with this people.

2. Baruch repeated Jeremiah's ſermons publickly in the houſe of the Lord, on the faſt-day: He ſtood in a chamber that belonged to Gemariah, and out of a window, or balcony, read to the people that were in the court, *ver.* 10. Note, When we are ſpeaking to God, we muſt be willing to hear from him; and therefore on days of faſting and prayer, it is requiſite that the word be read and preached. *Hearken unto me, that God may hearken unto you*, Judg. ix. 7. For our help in ſuing out mercy and grace, it is proper we ſhould be told of ſin and duty.

3. An account was brought of this to the princes that attended the court, and were now together in the ſecretary's office, here called *the ſcribe's chamber*; ver. 12. It ſhould ſeem, though the princes had called the people to meet in the houſe of God, to faſt and pray, and hear the word, they did not think fit to attend there themſelves, which was a ſign that it was not from a principle of true devotion, but meerly for faſhion-ſake, that they proclaimed this faſt. We are willing to hope, that it was not with an ill deſign, to bring Jeremiah into trouble for his preaching; but with a good deſign, to bring the princes into trouble for their ſins, that Michaiah informed the princes of what Baruch had read; for his father Gemariah ſo far countenanced Baruch, as to lend him his chamber to read out of. Michaiah finds the princes ſitting in *the ſcribe's chamber*, and tells them, they had better have been where he had been, hearing a good ſermon in the temple, which he gives them the heads of. Note, When we have heard ſome good word that has affected and edified us, we ſhould be ready to communicate it to others, that did not hear it, for their edification. *Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth ſpeaks.*

4. Baruch is ſent for, and is ordered to ſit down among them, and read it all over again to them, *ver.* 14, 15. which he readily did, not complaining that he was weary with his publick work, and therefore deſiring to be excuſed; nor upbraiding the princes with their being abſent from the temple, where they might have heard it, when he read it there. Note, God's miniſters muſt *become all things to all men*, if *by any means* they may *gain ſome*; muſt comply with them in circumſtances, that they may ſecure the ſubſtance. St. Paul preached privately to them of reputation, *Gal.* ii. 2.

5. The princes were for the preſent much affected with the word that was read to them, *ver.* 16. Obſerve, *They heard all the words*, they did not interrupt him, but very patiently attended to the reading of the whole book; for otherwiſe how could they make a competent judgment of it? And *when they had heard all, they were afraid*, were all afraid, *one* as well as *another*; like Felix, who trembled at Paul's reaſonings: The reproofs were juſt, and the threatnings terrible, and the predictions now in a fair way to be fulfilled; ſo that laying all together, they were in a great conſternation. We are not told what impreſſions this reading of the roll made upon the people, *ver.* 12. but the princes were put into a fright by it, and (as ſome read it) *looked one upon another*, not knowing what to ſay. They were all convinced it was worthy to be regarded, but none of them had courage to ſecond it, only they agreed to *tell the king of all theſe words*; and if he think fit to give credit to them, they will, otherwiſe not, no, though it were to prevent the ruin of the nation: And yet at the ſame time they knew the king's mind ſo far, that they adviſed Baruch and Jeremiah to hide themſelves, *ver.* 19. and to ſhift as they could for their own ſafety, expecting no other but that the king, inſtead of being convinced, would be exaſperated. Note, It is common for ſinners under convictions to endeavour to ſhake them off, by ſhifting off the proſecution of them to other perſons, as theſe princes here, or to another *more convenient ſeaſon*, as Felix.

6. They asked Baruch a trifling queſtion, *How he wrote all theſe words?* ver. 17. as if they ſuſpected there was ſomething extraordinary in it; but Baruch gives them a plain anſwer, that there was nothing but what was common in the manner of the writing, Jeremiah dictated, and he wrote, *ver.* 18. But thus it is common for thoſe who would avoid the convictions of the word of God, to ſtart needleſs queſtions about the way and manner of the inſpiration of it.

20. ¶ And they went in to the king into the court, but they laid up the roll in the chamber of Eliſhama the ſcribe, and told all the words in the ears of the king. 21. So the king ſent Jehudi to fet the roll, and he took it out of Eliſhama the ſcribes chamber, and Jehudi read it in the ears of the king, and in the ears of all the princes which ſtood beſide the king. 22. Now the king ſat in the winter-houſe, in the ninth month; and *there was a fire* on the hearth burning before him. 23. And it came to paſs, *that* when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the penknife, and caſt *it* into the fire that *was* on the hearth, until all the roll was conſumed in the fire that *was* on the hearth. 24. Yet they were not afraid, nor rent their garments, *neither* the king, nor any of his ſervants that heard all theſe words. 25. Nevertheleſs, Elnathan, and Delaiah, and Gemariah had made interceſſion to the king, that he would not burn the roll, but he would not hear them. 26. But the king commanded Jerahmeel the ſon of Hammelech, and Seraiah the ſon of Azriel, and Shelemiah the ſon of Abdeel, to take Baruch the ſcribe, and Jeremiah the prophet: but the LORD hid them. 27. ¶ Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah (after that the king had burnt the roll, and the words which Baruch wrote at the mouth of Jeremiah) ſaying, 28. Take thee again another roll, and write in it all the former words that were in the firſt roll, which Jehoiakim the king of Judah hath burnt. 29. And thou ſhalt ſay to Jehoiakim king of Judah, thus ſaith the LORD, Thou haſt burnt this roll, ſaying, Why haſt thou written therein, ſaying, The king of Babylon ſhall certainly come and deſtroy this land, and ſhall cauſe to ceaſe from thence man and beaſt? 30. Therefore thus ſaith the LORD, of Jehoiakim king of Judah, He ſhall have none to ſit upon the throne of David, and his dead body ſhall be caſt out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the froſt. 31. And I will puniſh him and his ſeed, and his ſervants, for their iniquity, and I will bring upon them, and upon the inhabitants of Jeruſalem, and upon the men of Judah all the evil that I have pronounced againſt them, but they hearkened not. 32. ¶ Then took Jeremiah another roll, and gave it to Baruch the ſcribe the ſon of Neriah, who wrote therein from the mouth of Jeremiah, all the words of the book which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burnt in the fire, and there were added beſides unto them many like words.

We have traced the roll to the people, and to the princes, and here we are to follow it to the king; and we find,

1. That upon notice given him concerning it, he ſent for it, and ordered it to be read to him, *ver.* 20, 21. He did not deſire that Baruch would come and read it himſelf, who could read it more intelligently, and with more authority and affection than any one elſe; nor did he order one of his princes to do it, though it had been no diſparagement to the greateſt of them, much leſs would he vouchſafe to read it himſelf; but Jehudi, one of his pages now in waiting, that was ſent to fetch it, is bid to read it, who, perhaps, ſcarce knew how to make ſenſe of it: But thoſe who thus deſpiſe the word of God will ſoon make it to appear, as this king here did, that they hate it too, and have not only low but ill thoughts of it.

2. That he had not patience to hear it read through as the princes had, but when he had heard *three or four leaves* read, in a rage *cut it with his penknife*, and threw it piece by piece *into the fire*, that he might be ſure to ſee it *all conſumed*, ver. 22, 23. This was a piece of as daring impiety as a man could lightly be guilty of, and a moſt impudent affront to the God of heaven, whoſe meſſage this was. 1. Thus he ſhewed his impatience of reproof, being reſolved to perſiſt in ſin, he would by no means bear to be told of his faults. 2. Thus he ſhewed his indignation at Baruch and Jeremiah; he would have cut them in pieces, and burnt them, if he had had them in his reach, when he was in this paſſion. 3. Thus he expreſt an obſtinate reſolution never to comply with the deſigns and intentions of the warnings given him; he will do what he will, whatſoever God by his prophets ſaith to the contrary. 4. Thus he fooliſhly hoped to defeat the threatnings denounced againſt him; as if God knew not how to execute the ſentence when the roll was gone in which it was written. 5. Thus he thought he had effectually provided, that the things contained in this roll ſhould ſpread no further, which was the care of the chief prieſts concerning the goſpel, *Acts* iv. 17. They had told him how this roll had been read to the people and to the princes, but (ſaith he) I will take a courſe it ſhall never be read more. See what an enmity againſt God there is in the carnal mind, and wonder at the patience of God, that he bears with ſuch indignities done to him!

3. That neither the king himſelf, nor any of his princes, were at all affected with the word, *they were not afraid*, ver. 24. no, not

not those princes that *trembled at the word*, when they heard it the first time, *ver.* 16. So soon, so easily do good impressions wear off! They shewed some concern till they saw how light the king made of it, and then they shook off all that concern. They *rent not their garments*, as Josiah did; this Jehoiakim's own father did, when he had the *book of the law* read to him, though it was not so particular as the contents of this roll were, nor so immediately adapted to the present posture of affairs.

4. That there were three of the princes, who had so much sense and grace left, as to interpose for the preventing of the burning of the roll, but in vain, *ver.* 25. If they had from the first shewed themselves, as they ought to have done, affected with the word, perhaps, they might have brought the king to a better mind, and have perswaded him to hear it patiently; but many times they that will not do the good they should, put it out of their own power to do the good they would.

5. That Jehoiakim, when he had thus in effect burnt God's warrant, by which he was arrested, as it were in a way of revenge, now he thought he had got the better, signed a warrant for the apprehending of Jeremiah and Baruch, God's ministers, *ver.* 26. *But the Lord hid them.* The princes bid them abscond, *ver.* 19. but it was neither the princes care for them, nor theirs for themselves, that secured them, it was under the divine protection that they were safe. Note, God will find out a shelter for his people, though their persecutors be never so industrious to get them into their power, till their hour is come; nay, and then he will himself be their *hiding place*.

6. That Jeremiah had orders and instructions to write the same words in another roll, that were written in the roll which Jehoiakim had burnt, *ver.* 27, 28. Note, Though the attempts of hell against the word of God are very daring, yet not one iota or tittle of it shall fall to the ground, nor shall the unbelief of man make the word of God of none effect. Enemies may prevail to burn many a bible, but they cannot abolish the word of God, can neither extirpate it, nor defeat the accomplishment of it. Though the tables of the law were broken, they were renewed again; and so out of the ashes of the roll that was burnt arose another Phœnix. *The word of the Lord endures for ever.*

7. That the king of Judah, though he be a king, shall be severely reckoned with by the King of kings for this indignity done to the written word. God took notice what it was in the roll that Jehoiakim took so much offence at: He was angry, because it was *written therein, saying*, Surely *the king of Babylon shall come and destroy this land*, ver. 29. And did not *the king of Babylon* come two years before this, and go far towards *the destroying of this land?* He did so, 2 *Chron.* xxxvi. 6, 7. in his third year, *Dan.* i. 1. So that God and his prophets were therefore *become his enemies, because they told him the truth*, told him of the desolation that was coming, but at the same time putting him into a fair way to prevent it. But if this be the thing he takes so heinously, let him know, 1. That the wrath of God shall come upon him and his family in the first place, by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar; he shall be cut off, and in a few weeks his son shall be dethroned, and exchange his royal robes for prison garments, so that *he shall have none to sit upon the throne of David*; the glory of that illustrious house shall be eclipsed, and die in him; *his dead body* shall lie unburied, or, which comes all to one, *he shall be buried with the burial of an ass*, that is thrown into the next ditch; it shall lie exposed to all weathers, *heat and frost*, which will occasion its putrefying and becoming lothsome the sooner. "Not that his bo-"dy (saith Mr. Gataker) could be sensible of such usage, or him-"self, being deceased, of ought that should befal his body; but "that the sight of a king's body in such a condition should be a "hideous spectacle, and a horrid monument of God's heavy wrath "and indignation against him, unto all that should behold it." Even *his seed and his servants* shall fare the worse for their relation to him, *ver.* 31. for they shall be punished, not *for his iniquity*, but so much the sooner *for their* own. 2. That all the evil pronounced against Judah and Jerusalem in that roll, shall be brought upon them. Though the copy be burnt, the original remains in the divine counsel, which shall again be copied out after another manner in bloody characters. Note, There is no escaping God's judgments by struggling with them; *who ever hardned his heart against God and prospered?*

Lastly, That when the roll was written anew, *there were added* to the former *many like words*, ver. 32. many more threatnings of wrath and vengeance; for since they will yet *walk contrary to God*, he will *heat the furnace seven times hotter*. Note, As God is in one mind, and none can turn him, so he hath still more arrows in his quiver; and those who contend with God's woes, do but prepare for themselves heavier of the same kind.

CHAP. XXXVII.

This chapter brings us very near the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, for the story of it lies in the latter end of Zedekiah's reign; we have in it, 1. *A general idea of the ill character of that reign*, ver. 1, 2. 2. *The message which Zedekiah notwithstanding sent to Jeremiah to desire his prayers*, ver. 3. 3. *The flattering hopes which the people had conceived, that the Chaldeans would quit the siege of Jerusalem*, ver. 4. 4. *The assurance God gave them by Jeremiah (who was now at liberty*, ver. 4.) *that the Chaldean army should renew the siege, and take the city*, ver. 6,—10. 5. *The imprisonment of Jeremiah, under pretence that he was a deserter*, ver. 11,—15. 6. *The kindness which Zedekiah shewed him when he was a prisoner*, ver. 16,—21.

1. AND king Zedekiah the son of Josiah reigned in stead of Coniah the son of Jehoiakim, whom Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon made king in the land of Judah. 2. But neither he, nor his servants, nor the people of the land, did hearken unto the words of the LORD, which he spake by the prophet Jeremiah. 3. And Zedekiah the king sent Jehucal the son of Shelemiah, and Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest, to the prophet Jeremiah, saying, Pray now unto the LORD our God for us. 4. Now Jeremiah came in and went out among the people: for they had not put him into prison. 5. Then Pharaohs army was come forth out of Egypt: and when the Chaldeans that besieged Jerusalem, heard tidings of them, they departed from Jerusalem. 6. ¶ Then came the word of the LORD unto the prophet Jeremiah, saying, 7. Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, Thus shall ye say to the king of Judah, that sent you unto me to enquire of me, Behold, Pharaohs army which is come forth to help you, shall return to Egypt into their own land. 8. And the Chaldeans shall come again, and fight against this city, and take it, and burn it with fire. 9. Thus saith the LORD, Deceive not your selves, saying, The Chaldeans shall surely depart from us: for they shall not depart. 10. For though ye had smitten the whole army of the Chaldeans that fight against you, and there remained *but* wounded men among them, *yet* should they rise up every man in his tent, and burn this city with fire.

Here is, 1. Jeremiah's preaching slighted, *ver.* 1, 2. Zedekiah succeeded Coniah, or Jeconiah, and though he saw in his predecessor the fatal consequences of contemning the word of God, yet he did not take warning, nor give any more regard to it than others had done before him. *Neither he nor his* courtiers, *nor the people of the land, hearkned unto the words of the Lord*, though they already began to be fulfilled. Note, Those have hearts wretchedly hard indeed, that see God's judgments on others, and feel them on themselves, and yet will not be humbled and brought to heed what he saith. These here had proof sufficient that it was the Lord that spake by Jeremiah the prophet, and yet they would not hearken to him.

2. Jeremiah's prayers desired. Zedekiah sent messengers to him, saying, *Pray now unto the Lord our God for us.* So he did, *chap.* xxi. 1, 2. and one of the messengers, Zephaniah, is the same there and here. Zedekiah is to be commended for this, and it shews he had some good in him, some sense of his need of God's favour, and of his own unworthiness to ask it for himself, and some value for good people and good ministers, that had an interest in heaven. Note, When we are in distress, we ought to desire the prayers of our ministers and christian friends, for thereby we put an honour upon prayer, and an esteem upon our brethren. Kings themselves should look upon their praying people, as the strength of the nation, *Zech.* xii. 5, 10. and yet this doth but help to condemn Zedekiah out of his own mouth: If indeed he looked upon Jeremiah as a prophet, whose prayers might avail much both for him and his people, why did he not then believe him, and *hearken to the words of the Lord*, which he spake by him? He desired his good prayers, but would not take his good counsel, nor be ruled by him, though he spake in God's name, and it appears by this, he knew he did. Note, It is common for those to desire to be prayed for, that yet will not be advised; but herein they put a cheat upon themselves; for how can we expect that God should hear others speaking to him for us, if we will not hear them speaking to us from him, and for him. Many that despise prayer when they are in prosperity, will be glad of it when they are in adversity: Now, *Give us of your oil.* When Zedekiah sent to the prophet to pray for him, he had better have sent for the prophet to pray with him; but he thought that below him; and how can they expect the comforts of religion, that will not stoop to the services of it?

3. Jerusalem flattered by the retreat of the Chaldean army from it. Jeremiah was now at liberty, *ver.* 4. he *went in and out among the people*, might freely speak to them, and be spoken to by them; Jerusalem also for the present was at liberty, *ver.* 5. Zedekiah, though a tributary to the king of Babylon, had entred into a private league with Pharaoh king of Egypt, *Ezek.* xvii. 15. pursuant to which, when the king of Babylon came to chastise him

him for his treachery, the king of Egypt, though he came no more in perſon after that great defeat which Nebuchadnezzar gave him in the reign of Jehoiakim, 2 *Kings* xxiv. 7. yet ſent ſome forces to relieve Jeruſalem, when it was beſieged; upon notice of the approach of which the Chaldeans raiſed the ſiege, probably, not for fear of them, but in policy, to fight them at a diſtance, before any of the Jewiſh forces could join them. From this they encouraged themſelves to hope, that Jeruſalem was delivered for good and all out of the hands of its enemies, and that the ſtorm was quite blown over. Note, Sinners are commonly hardned in their ſecurity by the intermiſſions of judgments, and the ſlow proceedings of them; and thoſe who will not be awakened by the word of God, may juſtly be lulled aſleep by the providence of God.

4. Jeruſalem threatned with the return of the Chaldean army, and with ruin by it. Zedekiah ſent to Jeremiah to deſire him to pray for them, that the Chaldean army might not return; but Jeremiah ſends them word back, that the decree was gone forth, and it was but a folly for them to expect peace, for God had begun a controverſy with them, which he would make an end of. *Thus ſaith the Lord, Deceive not your ſelves*, ver. 9. Note, Satan himſelf, though he is the great deceiver, could not deceive us, if we did not deceive our ſelves; and thus ſinners are their own deſtroyers, by being their own deceivers; which this is an aggravation of, that they are ſo frequently warned of it, and cautioned not to deceive themſelves; and they have the word of God, the great deſign of which is to undeceive them. Jeremiah uſeth no dark metaphors, but tells them plainly,

(1.) That the Egyptians ſhall retreat, and either give back, or be forced back into *their own land*, Ezek. xvii. 17. which was ſaid of old, *Iſa.* xxx. 7. is here ſaid again, *ver.* 7. That the Egyptians ſhall help in vain; they ſhall not dare to face the Chaldean army, but ſhall retire with precipitation. Note, If God help us not, no creature can. As no power can prevail againſt God, ſo none can avail without God, nor countervail his departures from us.

(2.) That the Chaldeans ſhall return, and ſhall renew the ſiege, and proſecute it with more vigour than ever. *They ſhall not depart* for good and all, *ver.* 9. *They ſhall come again*, ver. 8. they ſhall *fight againſt the city*. Note, God has the ſovereign command of all the hoſts of men, even of thoſe that know him not, that own him not, and they are all made to ſerve his purpoſes: He directs their marches, their counter-marches, their retreats, their returns, as pleaſeth him, and furious armies, like *ſtormy winds*, in all their motions, are *fulfilling his word*.

(3.) That Jeruſalem ſhall certainly be delivered into the hand of the Chaldeans, they ſhall *take it, and burn it with fire*, ver. 8. The ſentence paſt upon it ſhall be executed, and they ſhall be the executioners. O but (ſay they) the Chaldeans are withdrawn, they have quitted the enterprize as impracticable; and though they have, ſaith the prophet, nay, *though you had ſmitten* their army, ſo that many were ſlain, and all the reſt wounded, yet thoſe *wounded men ſhould riſe up, and burn this city*, ver. 10. This is deſigned to ſpeak the doom paſt upon Jeruſalem irrevocable, and its deſtruction inevitable; it muſt be laid in ruins, and theſe Chaldeans are the men that muſt do it, and it is now in vain to think of evading the ſtroke, or contending with it. Note, Whatever inſtruments God has determined to make uſe of in any ſervice for him, whether of mercy or judgment, they ſhall accompliſh that for which they are deſigned, whatever incapacity or diſability they may lie under or be reduced to. Thoſe by whom God has reſolved to ſave, or to deſtroy, ſaviours they ſhall be, and deſtroyers they ſhall be, yea, though they were all wounded; for as when God has work to do, he will not want inſtruments to do it with, though they may ſeem far to ſeek; ſo when he has choſen his inſtruments, they ſhall do the work, though they may ſeem very unlikely to accompliſh it.

11. ¶ And it came to paſs that when the army of the Chaldeans was broken up from Jeruſalem for fear of Pharaohs army, 12. Then Jeremiah went forth out of Jeruſalem to go into the land of Benjamin, to ſeparate himſelf thence in the mids of the people. 13. And when he was in the gate of Benjamin, a captain of the ward *was* there, whoſe name *was* Irijah, the ſon of Shelemiah, the ſon of Hananiah, and he took Jeremiah the prophet, ſaying, Thou falleſt away to the Chaldeans. 14. Then ſaid Jeremiah, *It is* falſe, I fall not away to the Chaldeans: but he hearkned not to him: ſo Irijah took Jeremiah and brought him to the princes. 15. Wherefore the princes were wroth with Jeremiah, and ſmote him, and put him in priſon in the houſe of Jonathan the ſcribe; for they had made that the priſon. 16. ¶ When Jeremiah was entred into the dungeon, and into the cabins, and Jeremiah had remained there many days: 17. Then Zedekiah the king ſent, and took him out; and the king asked him ſecretly in his houſe, and ſaid, Is there *any* word from the LORD? and Jeremiah ſaid, There is: for, ſaid he thou ſhalt be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon. 18. Moreover, Jeremiah ſaid unto king Zedekiah, What have I offended againſt thee, or againſt thy ſervants, or againſt this people, that ye have put me in priſon? 19. Where *are now* your prophets which propheſied unto you, ſaying, The king of Babylon ſhall not come againſt you, nor againſt this land? 20. Therefore hear now, I pray thee, O my lord the king, let my ſupplication, I pray thee, be accepted before thee; that thou cauſe me not to return to the houſe of Jonathan the ſcribe, leſt I die there. 21. Then Zedekiah the king commanded that they ſhould commit Jeremiah into the court of the priſon, and that they ſhould give him daily a piece of bread out of the bakers ſtreet, until all the bread in the city were ſpent. Thus Jeremiah remained in the court of the priſon.

We have here a further account concerning Jeremiah, who relates more paſſages concerning himſelf than any other of the prophets; for the hiſtories of the lives and ſufferings of God's miniſters, have been very ſerviceable to the church, as well as their preaching and writing.

1. We are here told, that Jeremiah, when he had an opportunity for it, attempted to retire out of Jeruſalem into the country, *ver.* 11, 12. *When the Chaldeans* had *broken up from Jeruſalem*, becauſe *of Pharaoh's army*, upon the notice of their advancing towards them, Jeremiah determined *to go into the* country, and, as the margin reads it, *to ſlip away from Jeruſalem in the midſt of the people*, who, in that interval of the ſiege, went out into the country to look after their affairs there; he endeavoured to ſteal away in the crowd, for, though he was a man of great eminency, he could well reconcile himſelf to obſcurity; though he was one of a thouſand, he was content to be loſt in the multitude, and buried alive in a corner, in a cottage. Whether he deſigned for Anathoth or no doth not appear, his concerns might call him thither, but his neighbours there were ſuch as, unleſs they were well mended ſince, *chap.* xi. 21. might diſcourage him from coming among them; or whether he did not intend to hide himſelf ſomewhere where he was not known, and fulfil his own wiſh, *chap.* ix. 2. *O that I had in the wilderneſs a lodging place!* Jeremiah found he could do no good in Jeruſalem, he laboured in vain among them, and therefore determined to leave them. Note, There are times when it is the wiſdom of good men to retire into privacy, to *enter into the chamber, and ſhut the doors about them*, Iſa. xxvi. 20.

2. That in this attempt he was ſeized as a deſerter, and committed to priſon, *ver.* 13, 14, 15. *He was in the gate of Benjamin*, ſo far he had gained his point, when *a captain of the ward*, who, probably, had the charge of that gate, diſcovered him, and *took him* into cuſtody. He was the grandſon of Hananiah, who the Jews ſay was Hananiah the falſe prophet, that conteſted with Jeremiah, *chap.* xxviii. 16. and that this young captain had a ſpite to Jeremiah upon that account. He could not arreſt him without ſome pretence, and that which he chargeth upon him is, *Thou falleſt away to the Chaldeans*; an unlikely ſtory, for the Chaldeans were now gone off, Jeremiah could not reach them; or if he could, who would go over to a baffled army? Jeremiah therefore, with good reaſon, and with both the confidence and mildneſs of an innocent man, denies the charge, *It is falſe, I fall not away to the Chaldeans*, I am going upon my own lawful occaſions. Note, It is no new thing for the church's beſt friends to be repreſented as in the intereſt of her worſt enemies; thus have the blackeſt characters been put upon the faireſt, pureſt minds, and, in ſuch a malicious world as this is, innocency, nay excellency it ſelf, is no fence againſt the baſeſt calumny. When at any time we are thus falſly accuſed, we may do as Jeremiah did, boldly deny the charge, and then commit our cauſe to him that judgeth righteouſly. Jeremiah's proteſtation of his integrity, though he be a prophet, a man of God, a man of honour and ſincerity, though he be a prieſt, and is ready to ſay it *in verbo ſacerdotis*, yet is not regarded; but he is brought before the privy-council, who, without examining him, and the proofs againſt him, but upon the baſe, malicious inſinuation of the captain, fell into a paſſion with him, they *were wroth*, and what juſtice could be expected from men, who, being in anger, would hear no reaſon? They beat him, without any regard had to his coat and character, and then *put him in priſon*, in the worſt priſon they had, that *in the houſe of Jonathan the ſcribe*, either it had been his houſe, and he had quitted it for the inconveniences of it, but it was thought good enough for a priſon; or it was now his houſe, and, perhaps, he was a rigid, ſevere man, that made it a houſe of cruel bondage to his priſoners. Into this priſon Jeremiah was thruſt, *into the dungeon*, which was dark and cold, damp and dirty, the moſt uncomfortable, unhealthful place in it; in the cells, or cabins, there he muſt lodge; among which there are no choice, for they are all alike miſerable lodging-places; *there Jeremiah remained many days*, and, for ought appears,

appears, no body came near him, or enquired after him. See what a world this is! the wicked princes that are in rebellion against God lie at ease, lie in state in their palaces, while godly Jeremiah that is in the service of God lies in pain, in a lothsome dungeon: It is well there is a world to come!

3. That Zedekiah at length sent for him, and shewed him some favour; but, probably, not till the Chaldean army was returned, and had laid fresh siege to the city; when their vain hopes with which they fed themselves, and in confidence of which they had re-inslaved their servants, *chap.* xxxiv. 11. were all vanished, then they were in a greater confusion and consternation than ever: O then (saith Zedekiah) send in all haste for the prophet; let me have some talk with him: When the Chaldeans were withdrawn, he only sent to the prophet to pray for him; but now they had again invested the city, he sent for him to consult him. Thus gracious will men be when pangs come upon them!

(1.) The king sent for him to give him private audience as an ambassador from God. He *asked him secretly in his house*, being ashamed to be seen in his company, *Is there any word from the Lord?* ver. 17. Any word of comfort? Canst thou give us any hopes that the Chaldeans shall again retire? Note, Those that will not hearken to God's admonitions when they are in prosperity, would be glad of his consolations when they are in adversity; and expect that his ministers should then speak words of peace to them; but how can they expect it? What have they to do with peace? Jeremiah's life and comfort is in Zedekiah's hand, and he has now a petition to present to him for his favour, and yet, having this opportunity, he tells him plainly, that *there is a word from the Lord*, but no word of comfort for him or his people: *Thou shalt be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon.* If Jeremiah had consulted with flesh and blood, he would have given him a plausible answer, and though he would not tell him a lie, yet he might have chosen whether he would tell him the worst at this time; what needed it, when he had so often told it him before? But Jeremiah was one that had *obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful*, and would not, to obtain mercy of man, be unfaithful either to God, or to his prince; he therefore tells him the truth, the whole truth: And since there was no remedy, it would be a kindness to the king to know his doom, that, being no surprize to him, it might be the less a terror, and he might provide to make the best of bad. Jeremiah takes this occasion to upbraid him and his people with the credit they gave to the false prophets, that told them *the king of Babylon* should *not come* at all, or, when he was withdrawn, should *not come* again *against* them, *ver.* 19. *Where are now your prophets*, that told you you should have peace? Note, Those that deceive themselves with groundless hopes of mercy, will justly be twitted with it, when the event hath undeceived them.

(2.) He improved this opportunity for the presenting of a private petition, as a poor prisoner, *ver.* 18, 20. It was not in Jeremiah's power to reverse this sentence God had passed upon Zedekiah, but it was in Zedekiah's power to reverse the sentence which the princes had given against him, and therefore, since he thought him fit to be used as a prophet, he would not think him fit to be abused as the worst of malefactors. He humbly expostulates with the king, *What have I offended against thee, or thy servants, or this people*, what law have I broke, what injury have I done to the common welfare, *that ye have put me in prison?* And many a one that has been very hardly dealt with, has been able to make the same appeal, and to make it good. He likewise earnestly begs, and very pathetically, *ver.* 20. *Cause me not to return* to yonder noisom goal, *to the house of Jonathan the scribe, lest I die there:* This was the language of innocent nature, sensible of its own grievances, and sollicitous for its own preservation. Though he was not at all unwilling to die God's martyr, yet having so fair an opportunity to get relief, he would not let it slip, lest he should die his own murtherer. When Jeremiah delivered God's message, he spake as one having authority, with the greatest boldness; but when he presented his own request, he spake as one under authority, with the greatest submissiveness: *Hear me, I pray thee, O my lord the king, let my supplication, I pray thee, be accepted before thee.* Here is not a word of complaint of the princes that unjustly committed him, no offering to bring an action of false imprisonment against them, but all in a way of modest supplication to the king, to teach us, that even when we act with the courage that becomes the faithful servants of God, yet we must carry our selves with the humility and modesty that becomes dutiful subjects to the government God hath set over us. A lion in God's cause, must be a lamb in his own. And we find that God gave Jeremiah favour in the eyes of the king. 1. He gave him his request, took care that he should not die in the dungeon, but ordered he should have the liberty of the *court of the prison*, where he might have a pleasant walk, and breathe a free air. 2. He gave him more than his request, took care he should not die for want, as many did that had their heels at liberty, by reason of the straitness of the siege; he ordered him his *daily bread out of the* publick stock (for the prison was within the verge of the court) *till all the bread was spent.* Zedekiah ought to have released him, nay, to have preferred him, to have made him a privy-counsellor, as Joseph was taken from prison to be the second man in the kingdom; but he had not courage to do that, it was well he did as he did, and it is an instance of the care God takes of his suffering servants, that are faithful to him. He can make even their confinement turn to their advantage, and the court of their prison to become as green pastures to them; and raise up such friends to provide for them, as that *in the days of famine they shall be satisfied. At destruction and famine thou shalt laugh.*

CHAP. XXXVIII.

In this chapter, just as in the former, we have Jeremiah greatly debased under the frowns of the princes, and yet greatly honoured by the favour of the king; they used him as a criminal, he used him as a privy-counsellor. Here, 1. Jeremiah for his faithfulness is put into the dungeon by the princes, ver. 1,—6. *2. At the intercession of Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, by special order from the king, he is taken up out of the dungeon, and confined only to the court of the prison,* ver. 7,—12. *3. He has a private conference with the king upon the present conjuncture of affairs,* ver. 14,—23. *4. Care is taken to keep that conference private,* ver. 24,—28.

1. THEN Shephatiah the son of Mattan, and Gedaliah the son of Pashur, and Jucal the son of Shelemiah, and Pashur the son of Malchiah, heard the words that Jeremiah had spoken unto all the people, saying, 2. Thus saith the LORD, He that remaineth in this city shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence: but he that goeth forth to the Chaldeans shall live; for he shall have his life for a prey, and shall live. 3. Thus saith the LORD, This city shall surely be given into the hand of the king of Babylons army, which shall take it. 4. Therefore the princes said unto the king, We beseech thee, let this man be put to death: for thus he weakneth the hands of the men of war that remain in this city, and the hands of all the people, in speaking such words unto them: for this man seeketh not the welfare of this people, but the hurt. 5. Then Zedekiah the king said, Behold, he *is* in your hand: for the king *is* not *he that* can do *any* thing against you. 6. Then took they Jeremiah, and cast him into the dungeon of Malchiah the son of Hammelech that *was* in the court of the prison: and they let down Jeremiah with cords. And in the dungeon *there was* no water, but mire: so Jeremiah sunk in the mire. 7. ¶ Now when Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, one of the eunuchs which was in the kings house, heard that they had put Jeremiah in the dungeon, (the king then sitting in the gate of Benjamin) 8. Ebed-melech went forth out of the kings house, and spake to the king, saying, 9. My lord the king, these men have done evil in all that they have done to Jeremiah the prophet, whom they have cast into the dungeon, and he is like to die for hunger in the place where he is, for *there is* no more bread in the city. 10. Then the king commanded Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, saying, Take from hence thirty men with thee, and take up Jeremiah the prophet out of the dungeon before he die. 11. So Ebed-melech took the men with him, and went into the house of the king under the treasury, and took thence old cast clouts, and old rotten rags, and let them down by cords into the dungeon to Jeremiah. 12. And Ebed-melech the Ethiopian said unto Jeremiah, Put now *these* old cast clouts, and rotten rags under thine arm-holes, under the cords. And Jeremiah did so. 13. So they drew up Jeremiah with cords, and took him up out of the dungeon, and Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison.

Here, 1. Jeremiah persists in his plain preaching; what he had many a time said, he still saith, *ver.* 3. *This city shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon*, though it hold out long, it will be taken at last; nor would he have so oft repeated this unwelcome message, but that he could put them in a certain way, though not to save the city, yet to save themselves; so that every man might have his own life given him for a prey, if he would be advised, *ver.* 2. Let him not stay in the city, in hopes to defend that, for it will be to no purpose, but let him *go forth to the Chaldeans*, and throw himself upon their mercy, before things come to extremity, and then he *shall live*; they will not put him to the sword, but give him quarter, *Satis est prostrasse leoni*, and he shall escape *the famine and pestilence*, which will be the death of multitudes

multitudes within the city. Note, Thoſe do better for themſelves, who patiently ſubmit to the rebukes of providence, than thoſe who contend with them. And if we cannot have our liberty, we muſt reckon it a mercy to have our lives, and not fooliſhly throw them away upon a point of honour; they may be reſerved for better times.

2. The princes perſiſt in their malice againſt Jeremiah. He was faithful to his country, and to his truſt as a prophet, though he had ſuffered many a time for his faithfulneſs, and though at this time he eat the king's bread, yet that did not ſtop his mouth. But his perſecutors were ſtill bitter againſt him, and complained that he abuſed the liberty he had of walking in the court of the priſon, for though he could not go to the temple to preach, yet he vented the ſame things in private converſation, to thoſe that came to viſit him, and therefore, *ver.* 4. they repreſent him to the king as a dangerous man, diſaffected to his country, and to the government he lived under; *he ſeeks not the welfare of this people, but the hurt*; an unjuſt inſinuation! for no man had laid out himſelf more for the good of Jeruſalem than he had done: They repreſent his preaching as having an ill tendency; the deſign of it was plainly to bring men to repent, and turn to God, which would have been as much as any thing a ſtrengthning to the hands both of the ſoldiery and of the burghers, and yet they repreſent it as *weakning their hands*, and diſcouraging them, which if it did, it was their own fault. Note, It is common for wicked people to look upon God's faithful miniſters as their enemies, only becauſe they ſhew them what enemies they are to themſelves while they continue impenitent.

3. Jeremiah hereupon, by the king's permiſſion, is put into a dungeon, with deſign he ſhall periſh there. Zedekiah, though he was under convictions that Jeremiah was a prophet, ſent of God, yet he had not courage to own his convictions, but yielded to the violence of his perſecutors, *ver.* 5. *He is in your hand*, and a worſe ſentence he could not have paſſed upon him. We found in Jehoiakim's reign, that the princes were better affected to the prophet than the king was, *chap.* xxxvi. 25. but now they were more violent againſt him, a ſign they were ripening apace for ruin. Had it been in a cauſe that concerned his own honour or profit, he would have let them know, that the king is he who can do what he pleaſeth, whether they will or no, but in the cauſe of God and his prophet, which he was very cool in, he baſely ſneaks, and truckles to them, *The king is not he that can do any thing againſt you.* Note, Thoſe will have a great deal to anſwer for, who, though they have a ſecret kindneſs for good people, dare not own it in a time of need, nor will do what they might do to prevent miſchief deſigned them. The princes having this general warrant from the king, preſently put poor *Jeremiah into the dungeon of Malchiah, that was in the court of the priſon*, ver. 6. a deep dungeon, for they *let* him *down* into it *with cords*; and a dirty one, for *there was no water* in it, *but mire*, ſtinking mire; and he *ſunk in the mire, up to the neck*, ſaith Joſephus: They that put him here doubtleſs deſigned he ſhould die here, die for hunger, die for cold, and ſo die miſerably, die obſcurely, fearing, if they ſhould put him to death openly, the people might be affected with what he would ſay, and be incenſed againſt them. Many of God's faithful witneſſes have thus been privately made away, and ſtarved to death in priſons, whoſe blood will be brought to account in the day of diſcovery. We are not here told what Jeremiah did in this diſtreſs, but he tells us himſelf, *Lam.* iii. 55. *I called upon thy name, O Lord, out of the low dungeon*, and, *ver.* 57. *Thou dreweſt near, ſaying, Fear not.*

4. Application is made to the king by an honeſt courtier Ebed-melech, one of the gentlemen of the bed-chamber, in behalf of the poor ſufferer. Though the princes carried on the matter as privately as they could, yet it came to the ear of this good man, who, probably, ſought opportunities to do good. It may be, he came to the knowledge of it by hearing Jeremiah's moans out of the dungeon, for it was in the king's houſe, *ver.* 7. *Ebed-melech* was an Ethiopian, a *ſtranger to the commonwealth of Iſrael*, and yet had in him more humanity, and more divinity too than native Iſraelites had. Chriſt found more faith among Gentiles than among Jews. Ebed-melech lived in a wicked court, and in a very corrupt degenerate age, and yet had a great ſenſe both of equity and piety. God has his remnant in all places, among all ſorts: There were *ſaints* even *in Cæſar's houſhold.* The king was now *ſitting in the gate of Benjamin*, to try cauſes, and receive appeals and petitions, or, perhaps, holding a council of war there; thither Ebed-melech went immediately to him, for the caſe would not admit delay, the prophet might have periſhed if he had trifled, or put it off till he had an opportunity of ſpeaking to the king in private. No time muſt be loſt when life is in danger, eſpecially ſo valuable a life. He boldly aſſerts that Jeremiah had a great deal of wrong done him, and is not afraid to tell the king ſo, though they were princes that did it; though they were now preſent in court, and though they had the king's warrant for what they did. Whither ſhould oppreſſed innocency flee for protection but to the throne, eſpecially when great men are its oppreſſors. Ebed-melech appears truly brave in this matter; he doth not mince the matter, though he had a place at court, which he would be in danger of loſing for his plain dealing, yet he tells the king faithfully, let him take it as he will. *Theſe men have done ill in all that they have done to Jeremiah:* They deal unjuſtly with him, for he had not deſerved any puniſhment at all; and they had dealt barbarouſly with him, ſo as they uſed not to deal with the vileſt malefactors. And they needed not to have put him to this miſerable death, for if they had let him alone where he was, he was *likely to die for hunger in the place where he was*, in the court of the priſon to which he was confined, *for there was no more bread in the city*; the ſtores out of which he was to have his allowance, *chap.* xxxvii. 21. were in a manner ſpent. See how God can raiſe up friends for his people in diſtreſs, where they little thought of them; and ſpirit men for his ſervice even beyond expectation!

5. Orders are immediately given for his releaſe, and Ebed-melech takes care to ſee them executed. The king, who, but now, durſt do nothing againſt the princes, had his heart wonderfully changed on a ſudden, and will now have Jeremiah releaſed in defiance of the princes, for therefore he orders no leſs than thirty men, and thoſe of the lifeguard, to be employed in fetching him out of the dungeon, leſt the princes ſhould raiſe a party to oppoſe it, *ver.* 10. Let this encourage us to appear boldly for God, we may ſucceed better than we could have thought; for *the hearts of kings are in the hand of God.* Ebed-melech gained his point, and ſoon brought Jeremiah the good news: and it is obſervable how particularly the manner of his drawing him out of the dungeon is related; for *God is not unrighteous to forget* any *work or labour of love* which is ſhewed to his people or miniſters, no nor any circumſtance of it, *Heb.* vi. 10. ſpecial notice is taken of his great tenderneſs in providing old ſoft rags for Jeremiah to put under his arm-holes to keep the cords from hurting him, wherewith he was to be drawn up, his arm-holes being probably galled by the cords wherewith he was let down. Nor did he throw the rags down to him, leſt they ſhould be loſt in the mire, but carefully let them down, *ver.* 11, 12. Note, Thoſe that are in diſtreſs ſhould not only be relieved, but relieved with compaſſion and marks of reſpect; all which ſhall be placed to account, and abound to a good account in the day of recompence. See what a good uſe even old rotten rags may be put to, which therefore ſhould not be made waſte of, no more than broken meat: even in the king's houſe, and *under the treaſury* too, theſe were carefully preſerved, for the uſe of the poor or ſick. Jeremiah is brought up out of the dungeon, and is now where he was, *in the court of the priſon*, ver. 13. Perhaps Ebed-melech could have made intereſt with the king to have got him his diſcharge from thence alſo, now he had the king's ear, but he thought him ſafer, and better provided for there, than he would be any where elſe. God can, when he pleaſeth, make a priſon to become a refuge and hiding place to his people in diſtreſs and danger.

14. ¶ Then Zedekiah the king ſent and took Jeremiah the prophet unto him into the third entry that is in the houſe of the LORD; and the king ſaid unto Jeremiah, I will aſk thee a thing: hide nothing from me. 15. Then Jeremiah ſaid unto Zedekiah, If I declare it unto thee, wilt thou not ſurely put me to death? and if I give thee counſel, wilt thou not hearken unto me? 16. So Zedekiah the king ſware ſecretly unto Jeremiah, ſaying, *As* the LORD liveth, that made us this ſoul, I will not put thee to death, neither will I give thee into the hand of theſe men that ſeek thy life. 17. Then ſaid Jeremiah unto Zedekiah, Thus ſaith the LORD the God of hoſts, the God of Iſrael, If thou wilt aſſuredly go forth unto the king of Babylons princes, then thy ſoul ſhall live, and this city ſhall not be burnt with fire, and thou ſhalt live, and thine houſe. 18. But if thou wilt not go forth to the king of Babylons princes, then ſhall this city be given into the hand of the Chaldeans, and they ſhall burn it with fire, and thou ſhalt not eſcape out of their hand. 19. And Zedekiah the king ſaid unto Jeremiah, I am afraid of the Jews that are fallen to the Chaldeans, leſt they deliver me into their hand, and they mock me. 20. But Jeremiah ſaid, They ſhall not deliver *thee:* obey, I beſeech thee, the voice of the LORD which I ſpeak unto thee: ſo it ſhall be well unto thee, and thy ſoul ſhall live. 21. But if thou refuſe to go forth, this is the word that the LORD hath ſhewed me: 22. And behold, all the women that are left in the king of Judahs houſe, *ſhall be* brought forth to the king of Babylons princes, and thoſe *women* ſhall ſay, Thy friends have ſet thee on, and have prevailed againſt thee: thy feet are ſunk in the mire, *and* they are turned away back. 23. So they ſhall bring out all thy wives and thy children to the Chaldeans, and thou ſhalt not eſcape

out

out of their hand, but ſhalt be taken by the hand of the king of Babylon: and thou ſhalt cauſe this city to be burnt with fire. 24. ¶ Then ſaid Zedekiah unto Jeremiah, Let no man know of theſe words, and thou ſhalt not die. 25. But if the princes hear that I have talked with thee, and they come unto thee, and ſay unto thee, Declare unto us now what thou haſt ſaid unto the king, hide it not from us, and we will not put thee to death; alſo what the king ſaid unto thee: 26. Then thou ſhalt ſay unto them, I preſented my ſupplication before the king, that he would not cauſe me to return to Jonathan's houſe to die there. 27. Then came all the princes unto Jeremiah, and aſked him, and he told them according to all theſe words that the king had commanded: ſo they left off ſpeaking with him, for the matter was not perceived. 28. So Jeremiah abode in the court of the priſon, until the day that Jeruſalem was taken, and he was *there* when Jeruſalem was taken.

In the foregoing chapter we had the king in cloſe conference with Jeremiah, and here again, though, *ver.* 5. he had given him up into the hands of his enemies; ſuch a ſtruggle there was in the breaſt of this unhappy prince, between his convictions and his corruptions. Obſerve,

1. The honour that Zedekiah did to the prophet. When he was newly fetched out of the dungeon he ſent for him to adviſe with him privately. He met him in *the third entry*, or, as the margin reads it, *the principal entry*, that *is in*, or leads towards, or adjoins to *the houſe of the Lord*, ver. 14. In appointing this place of interview with the prophet, perhaps he intended to ſhew a reſpect and reverence for *the houſe of God*, which was proper enough now he was deſiring to hear *the word of God*. Zedekiah would ask *Jeremiah a thing*, it ſhould rather be rendered, *a word*; I am here asking thee for *a word of prediction*, of counſel, of comfort, *a word from the Lord*, chap. xxxvii. 17. Whatever word thou haſt for me, *hide it not from me*, let me know the worſt. He had been told plainly what things would come to in the foregoing chapter, but, like Balaam, he asks again, in hopes to get a more pleaſing anſwer, as if God, who is *in one mind*, were altogether ſuch a one as himſelf, who was in many minds.

2. The bargain that Jeremiah made with him before he would give him his advice, *ver.* 15. He would indent, (1.) For his own ſafety; Zedekiah would have him deal faithfully with him; and if I do, ſaith Jeremiah, *wilt thou not put me to death?* I am afraid *thou wilt*, ſo ſome take it, what elſe can I expect when thou art led blindfold by the princes. Or, Wilt thou promiſe that thou wilt not? Not that Jeremiah was backward to ſeal the doctrine he preached with his blood, when he was called to it; but, in doing our duty, we ought to uſe all lawful means for our own preſervation; even the apoſtles of Chriſt did ſo. (2.) He would indent for the ſucceſs of his advice, being no leſs concerned for Zedekiah's welfare than for his own. He is willing to give him wholſome advice, and doth not upbraid him with his unkindneſs in ſuffering him to be put into the dungeon, nor bid him go and conſult with his princes, whoſe judgments he had ſuch a value for: Miniſters muſt with meekneſs inſtruct even thoſe that oppoſe themſelves, and render good for evil. He is deſirous he ſhould *hear counſel and receive inſtruction. Wilt thou not hearken unto me?* Surely thou wilt, I am in hopes to find thee pliable at laſt, and now *in this thy day*, willing to know *the things that belong to thy peace*. Note, Then, and then only, there is hopes of ſinners, when they are willing to kearken to good counſel. Some read it as ſpoken deſpairingly, *If I give thee counſel, thou wilt not hearken unto me*; I have reaſon to fear thou wilt not, and then I had as good keep my counſel to myſelf. Note, Miniſters have little heart to ſpeak to thoſe who have long and often turned a deaf ear to them. Now, as to this latter concern of Jeremiah's, Zedekiah makes him no anſwer, will not promiſe to hearken to his advice: though he deſires to know what is the mind of God, yet he will reſerve himſelf a liberty when he doth know it, to do as he thinks fit; as if it were the prerogative of a prince not to have his ruin prevented by good counſel. But, as to the prophet's ſafety, he promiſeth him, upon the word of a king, and confirms his promiſe with an oath, that whatever he ſhould ſay to him, no advantage ſhould be taken againſt him for it, *I will neither put thee to death, nor deliver thee into the hands of thoſe that will*, ver. 16. this he thought was a mighty favour, and yet Nebuchadnezzar and Belſhazzar, when Daniel read their doom, not only protected him, but preferred and rewarded him, *Dan.* ii. 48. and v. 29. Zedekiah's oath on this occaſion is ſolemn and very obſervable, *As the Lord liveth, who made us this ſoul*, who gave me my life, and thee thine: therefore I dare not take away thy life unjuſtly, knowing that then I ſhould forfeit my own to him that is Lord of life. Note, God is the Father of ſpirits: ſouls are his workmanſhip, and they are more *fearfully and wonderfully made* than bodies are. The ſoul both of the greateſt prince and of the pooreſt priſoner, is of God's making; *he faſhioneth their hearts* alike eaſily. In all our appeals to God, and in all our dealings both with ourſelves and others, we ought to conſider this, that *the living God made us theſe ſouls*.

3. The good advice that Jeremiah gave him, with good reaſons why he ſhould take it, not from any prudence or politicks of his own, but in the *name of the Lord, the God of hoſts*, and *God of Iſrael*, not as a ſtateſman, but as a prophet, he adviſeth him by all means to ſurrender himſelf and his city *to the king of Babylon's princes*; *go forth to them*, and make the beſt terms thou canſt with them, *ver.* 17. This was the ſame advice he had given to the people, *ver.* 2. and before, *chap.* xxi. 9. to ſubmit to divine judgments, and not think of contending with them. Note, In dealing with God, that which is good counſel to the meaneſt, is ſo to the greateſt, for *there is no reſpect of perſons* with him. To perſwade him to take this counſel, he ſets before him, good and evil, life and death. (1.) If he will tamely yield, he ſhall ſave his children from the ſword, and Jeruſalem from the flames. The white flag is yet hung out; if he will but acknowledge God's juſtice, he ſhall experience his mercy, *the city ſhall not be burnt*, and *thou ſhalt live, and thy houſe*. But, (2.) If he will obſtinately ſtand it out, it will be the ruin both of his houſe and Jeruſalem, *ver.* 18. for when God judgeth he will overcome. This is the caſe of ſinners with God, let them humbly ſubmit to his grace and government, and they ſhall live; let them *take hold on his ſtrength, that they may make peace, and they ſhall make peace*; but if they harden their hearts againſt his propoſals, it will certainly be to their deſtruction: They muſt either bend or break.

4. The objection which Zedekiah made againſt the prophet's advice, *ver.* 19. Jeremiah ſpoke to him by prophecy, in the name of God, and therefore if he had had a due regard to the divine authority, wiſdom, and goodneſs, as ſoon as he underſtood what the mind of God was, he ſhould immediately have acquieſced in it, and reſolved to obſerve it without diſputing: but, as if it had been the dictate only of Jeremiah's prudence, he advanceth againſt it ſome prudential conſiderations of his own; but human wiſdom is folly when it contradicts the divine counſels. All he ſuggeſts is, *I am afraid*, not of the Chaldeans, their princes are men of honour, but of the Jews, that are already gone over to the Chaldeans, when they ſee me follow them, who had ſo much oppoſed their going, they will laugh at me, and ſay, *Art thou alſo become weak as water?* Iſa. xiv. 10. Now, (1.) It was not at all likely that he ſhould be thus expoſed and ridiculed, that the Chaldeans ſhould ſo far gratify the Jews, or trample upon him, as to deliver him into their hands; nor that the Jews, who were themſelves captives, ſhould be in ſuch a gay humour, as to make a jeſt of the miſery of their prince. Note, We often frighten ourſelves from our duty by fooliſh, cauſleſs, groundleſs fears, that are meerly the creatures of our own fancy and imagination. (2.) If he ſhould be taunted at a little by the Jews, could he not deſpiſe it and make light of it? What harm would it do him? Note, Thoſe have very weak and fretful ſpirits indeed that cannot bear to be laughed at for that which is both their duty and their intereſt. (3.) Though it had been really the greateſt perſonal miſchief that he could have imagined it to be, yet he ought to have ventured it in obedience to God, and for the preſervation of his family and city. He thought it would be looked upon as a piece of cowardiſe to ſurrender, whereas it would be really an inſtance of true courage chearfully to bear a leſſer evil, the mocking of the Jews, for the avoiding of a greater, the ruin of his family and kingdom.

5. The preſſing importunity with which Jeremiah followed the advice he had given the king. He aſſures him, that if he would comply with the will of God herein, the thing he feared ſhould not come upon him, *ver.* 29. *They ſhall not deliver thee up*, but treat thee as becomes thy character. He begs of him, after all the fooliſh games he had played, to manage wiſely the laſt ſtake, and now at length do well for himſelf, *Obey, I beſeech thee, the voice of the Lord*, becauſe it is his voice, ſo *it ſhall be well unto thee*. But he tells him what would be the conſequence if he would not obey. (1.) He himſelf would *fall into the hands of the Chaldeans*, as implacable enemies, whom he might now make his friends, by throwing himſelf into their hands: If he muſt fall, he ſhould contrive how to fall eaſily; *thou ſhalt not eſcape*, as thou hopeſt to do, *ver.* 23. (2.) He would himſelf be chargeable with the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, which he pretended a concern for the preſervation of, *Thou ſhalt cauſe this city to be burnt with fire*, for by a little ſubmiſſion and ſelf-denial thou mightſt have prevented it. Thus ſubjects often ſuffer for the pride and wilfulneſs of their rulers, who ſhould be their protectors, but prove their deſtroyers. (3.) Whereas he cauſeleſly feared an unjuſt reproach for ſurrendring, he ſhould certainly fall under a juſt reproach for ſtanding it out, and that from women too, *ver.* 22. The court ladies that were left when Jehoiakim and Jeconiah were carried away, will now, at length, fall into the hands of the enemy, and they ſhall ſay, *The men of thy peace*, whom thou didſt conſult with and confide in, and who promiſed thee peace if thou wouldſt be ruled by them; they have *ſet thee on*, have encouraged thee to be bold and brave, and hold out to the laſt extremity; and ſee what comes of it? They, by prevailing upon thee, have *prevailed againſt thee*, and thou findeſt thoſe thy real enemies, that would be thought thine only friends.

Now

Now *thy feet are ſunk in the mire*, thou art embaraſſed, and haſt no way to help thy ſelf; thy feet cannot get forward, but are *turned away back*. Thus will Zedekiah be bantered by the women, when all his wives and children ſhall be made a prey to the conquerors, *ver.* 23. Note, That what we ſeek to avoid by ſin, will be juſtly brought upon us by the righteouſneſs of God. And thoſe that decline the way of duty for fear of reproach, will certainly meet with much greater reproach in the way of diſobedience. *The fear of the wicked it ſhall come upon him*, Proverbs, x. 24.

6. The care which Zedekiah took to keep this conference private, *ver.* 24. *Let no man know of theſe words.* He doth not at all incline to take God's counſel, nor ſo much as promiſe to conſider of it; for ſo obſtinate has he been to the calls of God, and ſo wilful in the ways of ſin, that though he has good counſel given him, he ſeems to be given up to walk in his own counſels. He hath nothing to object againſt Jeremiah's advice, and yet he will not follow it. Many hear God's words, but will not do them.

(1.) Jeremiah is charged to let no man know of what had paſt between the king and him. Zedekiah is concerned to keep it private, not ſo much for Jeremiah's ſafety, for he knew the princes could do him no hurt without his permiſſion, but for his own reputation. Note, Many have really a better affection to good men and good things than they are willing to own. God's prophets are manifeſt in their conſciences, 2 *Cor.* v. 11. but they care not for manifeſting that to the world; they would rather do them a kindneſs, than have it known that they do: ſuch, it is to be feared, *love the praiſe of men more than the praiſe of God.*

(2.) He is inſtructed what to ſay to the princes if they ſhould examine him about it. He muſt tell them that he was petitioning the king not to remand him back to *the houſe of Jonathan the ſcribe*, ver. 25, 26. and he did tell them ſo, *ver.* 27. and, no doubt, it was true: he would not let ſlip ſo fair an opportunity of engaging the king's favour; ſo that this was no lie or equivocation, but a part of the truth, which it was lawful for him to put them off with when he was under no obligation at all to tell them the whole truth. Note, Though we muſt be ſo harmleſs as doves, as never to tell a wilful lie, yet we muſt be ſo wiſe as ſerpents, as not needleſly to expoſe our ſelves to danger by telling all we know.

CHAP. XXXIX.

As the prophet Iſaiah, after he had largely foretold the deliverance of Jeruſalem out of the hands of the king of Aſſyria, gave a particular narrative of the ſtory, that it might appear how exactly the event anſwered the prediction, ſo the prophet Jeremiah, after he had largely foretold the delivering of Jeruſalem into the hands of the king of Babylon, gives a particular account of that ſad event, for the ſame reaſon. That melancholy ſtory we have in this chapter, which ſerves to diſprove the falſe flattering prophets, and to confirm the word of God's meſſengers. We are here told, (1.) That Jeruſalem, after eighteen months ſiege, was taken by the Chaldean army, ver. 1, —3. *(2.) That king Zedekiah attempting to make his eſcape, was ſeized and made a miſerable captive to the king of Babylon*, ver. 4, —7. *(3.) That Jeruſalem was burnt to the ground, and the people carried captive, except the poor*, ver. 8, —10. *(4.) That the Chaldeans were very kind to Jeremiah, and took particular care of him*, ver. 11, —14. *(5.) That Ebed-melech too, for his kindneſs, had a protection from God himſelf in this day of deſolation*, ver. 15, —18.

1. IN the ninth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the tenth month, came Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and all his army againſt Jeruſalem, and they beſieged it. 2. *And* in the eleventh year of Zedekiah, in the fourth month, the ninth *day* of the month, the city was broken up. 3. And all the princes of the king of Babylon came in, and ſat in the middle gate, *even* Nergal-ſharezer, Samgar-nebo, Sarſechim, Rab-ſaris, Nergal-ſharezer, Rad-mag, with all the reſidue of the princes of the king of Babylon. 4. ¶ And it came to paſs, *that* when Zedekiah the king of Judah ſaw them, and all the men of war, then they fled, and went forth out of the city by night, by the way of the king's garden, by the gate between the two walls, and he went out the way of the plain. 5. But the Chaldeans army purſued after them, and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho: and when they had taken him, they brought him up to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon to Riblah in the land of Hamath, where he gave judgment upon him. 6. Then the king of Babylon ſlew the ſons of Zedekiah in Riblah before his eyes: alſo the king of Babylon ſlew all the nobles of Judah. 7. Moreover, he put out Zedekiahs eyes, and bound him with chains to carry him to Babylon. 8. ¶ And the Chaldeans burnt the kings houſe, and the houſes of the people with fire, and brake down the walls of Jeruſalem. 9. Then Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard carried away captive into Babylon the remnant of the people that remained in the city, and thoſe that fell away, that fell to him, with the reſt of the people that remained. 10. But Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard, left of the poor of the people which had nothing, in the land of Judah, and gave them vineyards and fields at the ſame time.

We were told in the cloſe of the foregoing chapter, that *Jeremiah abode patiently in the court of the priſon, until the day that Jeruſalem was taken.* He gave the princes no further diſturbance by his propheſying, nor they him by their perſecutions, for he had no more to ſay than what he had ſaid, and the ſiege being carried on briskly, God found them other work to do. And ſee here what it came to.

1. The city is at length taken by ſtorm, for how could it hold out when God himſelf fought againſt it. Nebuchadnezzar's army ſat down before it in the *ninth* year of Zedekiah, *in the tenth month*, ver. 1. in the depth of winter; Nebuchadnezzar himſelf ſoon after retired to take his pleaſure, and left his generals to carry on the ſiege: they intermitted it a while, but ſoon renewed it with a redoubled force and vigour. At length, *in the eleventh year, in the fourth month*, about midſummer, they entered the city, the ſoldiers being ſo weakned with famine, and all their proviſions being now ſpent, that they were not able to make any reſiſtance, *ver.* 2. Jeruſalem was ſo ſtrong a place that no body would have believed the enemy could ever have entered its gates, *Lam.* iv. 12. But ſin had provoked God to withdraw his protection, and then, like Samſon when his hair is cut, it is weak as other cities.

2. The princes of the king of Babylon take poſſeſſion of the *middle gate*, ver. 3. Some think it was the ſame with that which is called the *ſecond gate*, Zeph. i. 10. which is ſuppoſed to be in the middle wall that divided between one part of the city and the other; here they cautiouſly made a halt, and durſt not go forward into ſo large a city, among men that, perhaps, would ſell their lives as dear as they could, until they had given directions for the ſearching of all places, that they might not be ſurprized by any ambuſh. They ſat in the *middle gate*, from thence to take a view of the city, and give orders. The princes are here named, rough and uncouth names they are, to intimate what a ſad change ſin had made; there where Eliakim and Helkiah, who bare the name of the God of Iſrael, uſed to ſit, now ſit Nergal-ſharezer, and Shamgar-nebo, *&c.* who bare the names of the heathen gods. Rabſares and Rab-mag are ſuppoſed to be not the names of diſtinct perſons, but the titles of thoſe whoſe names go before: Sarſechim was Rabſaris, *i.e.* captain of the guard, and Nergal-ſharerer, to diſtinguiſh him from the other of the ſame name that is put firſt, is called Rab-mag, Camp-maſter, either muſter-maſter or quarter-maſter: theſe and other the great generals ſat in the gate. And now was fulfilled what Jeremiah propheſied long ſince, *chap.* i. 15. that the families of the kingdoms of the north ſhould ſet every one his throne at the entring of the gates of Jeruſalem; juſtly do the princes of the heathen ſet up themſelves there, where the gods of the heathen had been ſo often ſet up.

3. Zedekiah having in diſguiſe, perhaps, ſeen the princes of the king of Babylon take poſſeſſion of one of the gates of the city, thought it high time to ſhift for his own ſafety, and loaded with guilt and fear, he *went out of the city*, under no other protection but that of *the night*, ver. 4. which ſoon failed him, for he was diſcovered, purſued, and overtaken, though he made the beſt of his way, he could make nothing of it, could not get forward, but *in the plains of Jericho* fell into the hands of the purſuers, *ver.* 5. thence he was brought priſoner to Riblah, where the king of Babylon paſſed ſentence upon him as a rebel, not ſentence of death, but one may almoſt ſay, a worſe thing. For, (1.) He *ſlew his ſons before his eyes*, and they muſt all be little, ſome of them infants, for Zedekiah himſelf was now but thirty two years of age. The deaths of theſe ſweet babes muſt needs be ſo many deaths to himſelf, eſpecially when he conſidered that his own obſtinacy was the cauſe of it, for he was particularly told of this thing, *chap.* xxxviii. 23. *They ſhall bring forth thy wives and children to the Chaldeans.* (2.) He *ſlew all the nobles of Judah*, ver. 6. probably, not thoſe princes of Jeruſalem who had adviſed him to this deſperate courſe, it would be a ſatisfaction to him to ſee them cut off, but the great men of the country who were innocent of the matter. (3.) He ordered *Zedekiah to have his eyes put out*, ver. 7. ſo condemning him to darkneſs for life, who had ſhut his eyes againſt the clear light of God's word, and was of thoſe princes who *will not underſtand*, but *walk on in darkneſs*, Pſal. lxxxii. 5. (4.) He *bound him with two brazen chains or fetters* (ſo the margin reads it) to carry him away to Babylon, there to ſpend the reſt of his days in miſery. All this ſad ſtory we had before, 2 *Kings* xxv. 4, *&c.*

4. Some time after the city was burnt, temple and palace and all, and the wall of it broken down, *ver.* 8. *O Jeruſalem, Jeruſalem!* this comes of *killing the prophets*, and *ſtoning them that were*

were ſent to thee. O Zedekiah, Zedekiah! this thou mighteſt have prevented, if thou wouldſt but have taken God's counſel, and yielded in time.

5. The people that were left were all *carried away captives to Babylon*, ver. 9. now they muſt bid a final farewel to the land of their nativity, that pleaſant land, and to all their poſſeſſions and enjoyments in it: muſt be driven ſome hundreds of miles, like beaſts, before the conquerors, that were now their cruel maſters, muſt lie at their mercy in a ſtrange land, and be ſervants to them who would be ſure to rule them with rigour. The word *Tyrant* is originally a Chaldee word, and is often uſed for *Lords* by the Chaldee paraphraſt, as if the Chaldeans, when they were lords, tyrannized more than any other: we have reaſon to think the poor Jews had reaſon to ſay ſo. Some few were left behind, but they were *the poor of the people*, that had nothing to loſe, and therefore never made any reſiſtance. And they not only had their liberty, and were left to tarry at home, but the *captain of the guard gave them vineyards and fields at the ſame time*, ſuch as they were never maſters of before, *ver.* 10. Obſerve here, 1. The wonderful changes of providence; ſome are abaſed, others advanced, 1 *Sam.* ii. 5. the *hungry filled with good things, and the rich ſent empty away.* The ruin of ſome proves the riſe of others. Let us therefore *rejoice as though we rejoiced not* in our abundance, and *weep as though we wept not* in our diſtreſſes. 2. The juſt retributions of providence: the rich had been proud oppreſſors, and now they are juſtly puniſhed for their injuſtice: the poor had been patient ſufferers, and now they are graciouſly rewarded for their patience, and amends made them for all their loſſes: for, *verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth*, even in this world, much more in the other.

11. ¶ Now Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon gave charge concerning Jeremiah to Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard, ſaying, 12. Take him, and look well to him, and do him no harm, but do unto him even as he ſhall ſay unto thee. 13. So Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard ſent, and Nebuſhaſban, Rabſaris, and Nergal-ſharezer, Rab-mag, and all the king of Babylons princes: 14. Even they ſent, and took Jeremiah out of the court of the priſon, and committed him unto Gedaliah the ſon of Ahikam, the ſon of Shaphan, that he ſhould carry him home: ſo he dwelt among the people. 15. ¶ Now the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah, while he was ſhut up in the court of the priſon, ſaying, 16. Go and ſpeak to Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, ſaying, Thus ſaith the LORD of hoſts the God of Iſrael, Behold, I will bring my words upon this city for evil, and not for good, and they ſhall be *accompliſhed* in that day before thee. 17. But I will deliver thee in that day, ſaith the LORD, and thou ſhalt not be given into the hand of the men of whom thou *art* afraid. 18. For I will ſurely deliver thee, and thou ſhalt not fall by the ſword, but thy life ſhall be for a prey unto thee, becauſe thou haſt put thy truſt in me, ſaith the LORD.

Here we muſt ſing of mercy, as in the former part of the chapter we ſang of judgment, and muſt ſing unto God of both. We may obſerve here,

(1.) A gracious providence concerning Jeremiah. When Jeruſalem was laid in ruins, and all *mens hearts failed them for fear*, then might he *lift up his head* with comfort, *knowing that his redemption drew nigh*, as Chriſt's followers, when the ſecond deſtruction of Jeruſalem was haſtning on, *Luke* xxi. 28. Nebuchadnezzar had given particular orders that care ſhould be taken of him, and he ſhould be in all reſpects well uſed, *ver.* 11, 12. Nebuzar-adan, and the reſt of the king of Babylon's princes obſerved theſe orders, diſcharged him out of priſon, and did every thing to make him eaſy, *ver.* 13, 14.

Now we may look upon this,

1. As a very generous act of Nebuchadnezzar, who, though he was a haughty potentate, yet took cognizance of this poor prophet; doubtleſs he had received information concerning him from the deſerters, that he had foretold the king of Babylon's ſucceſſes againſt Judah and other countries, that he had preſſed his prince and people to ſubmit to him, and that he had ſuffered very hard things for ſo doing; and in conſideration of all this (though, perhaps, he might have heard alſo that he had foretold the deſtruction of Babylon at length) he gave him theſe extraordinary marks of his favour. Note, It is the character of a great ſoul to take notice of the ſervices and ſufferings of the meaneſt. It was honourably done of the king to give this charge, even before the city was taken, and of the captains to obſerve it, even in the heat of action, and it is recorded for imitation.

2. As a reproach to Zedekiah and the princes of Iſrael, they put him into priſon, and the king of Babylon and his princes took him out. God's people and miniſters have often found fairer and kinder uſage among ſtrangers and infidels, than among thoſe that call themſelves of the holy city. St. Paul found more favour and juſtice with king Agrippa, than with Ananias the high-prieſt.

3. As the performance of God's promiſe to Jeremiah, in recompence for his ſervices, *chap.* xv. 11. *I will cauſe the enemy to treat thee well in the day of evil.* Jeremiah had been faithful to his truſt as a prophet, and now God approves himſelf faithful to him, and the promiſe he had made him. Now he is comforted, according to the time wherein he had been afflicted, and ſees thouſands fall on each hand, and himſelf ſafe. The falſe prophets fell by thoſe judgments which they ſaid ſhould never come, *chap.* xiv. 15. which made their miſery the more terrible to them. The true prophet eſcaped thoſe judgments which he ſaid would come, and that made his eſcape the more comfortable to him. The ſame that were the inſtruments of puniſhing the perſecutors, were the inſtruments of relieving the perſecuted; and Jeremiah thought never the worſe of his deliverance for its coming by the hand of the king of Babylon, but ſaw the more of the hand of God in it. A fuller account of this matter we ſhall meet with in the next chapter.

(2.) A gracious meſſage to Ebed-melech, to aſſure him of a recompence for his kindneſs to Jeremiah. This meſſage was ſent him by Jeremiah himſelf, who, when he returned him thanks for his kindneſs to him, thus turned him over to God to be his paymaſter. He relieved *a prophet in the name of a prophet*, and thus he had *a prophet's reward.* This meſſage was delivered to him immediately after he had done that kindneſs to Jeremiah, but it is mentioned here after the taking of the city, to ſhew that as God was kind to Jeremiah at that time, ſo he was to Ebed-melech, for his ſake; and it was a token of ſpecial favour to both, and they ought ſo to account it, that they were not involved in any of the common calamities. Jeremiah is bid to tell him, 1. That God would certainly bring upon Jeruſalem the ruin that had been long and often threatned; and for his further ſatisfaction, in having been kind to Jeremiah, he ſhould ſee him abundantly proved a true prophet, *ver.* 16. 2. That God took notice of the fear he had of the judgments coming: Though he was bravely bold in the ſervice of God, yet he was afraid of the rod of God. The enemies were *men of whom he was afraid.* Note, God knows how to adapt and accommodate his comforts to the fears and griefs of his people, for he *knows their ſouls in adverſity.* 3. That he ſhall be delivered from having a ſhare in the common calamity; *I will deliver thee, I will ſurely deliver thee.* He had been inſtrumental to deliver God's prophet out of the dungeon, and now God promiſeth to deliver him; for he will be behind hand with none for any ſervice they do directly or indirectly for his name. Thou haſt ſaved Jeremiah's life, that was precious to thee, and therefore *thy life ſhall be given thee for a prey.* 4. The reaſon given for this diſtinguiſhing favour God had in ſtore for him is, *becauſe thou haſt put thy truſt in me, ſaith the Lord.* God in recompenſing mens ſervices, has an eye to the principle they go upon in thoſe ſervices, and rewards according to thoſe principles: And there is no principle of obedience that will be more acceptable to God, nor have a greater influence upon us, than a believing confidence in God. Ebed-melech truſted in God, that he would own him and ſtand by him, and then he was not afraid of the face of man. And thoſe who truſt God, as this good man did, in the way of duty, will find that their hope ſhall not make them aſhamed in times of the greateſt danger.

CHAP. XL.

We have attended Jeruſalem's funeral pile, and have taken our leave of the captives that were carried to Babylon, not expecting to hear any more of them in this book, perhaps, we may in Ezekiel, and muſt in this and the four following chapters obſerve the ſtory of thoſe few Jews that were left to remain in the land, after their brethren were carried away, and it is a very melancholy ſtory; for, though at firſt there were ſome hopeful proſpects of their well-doing, they ſoon appeared as obſtinate in ſin as ever, unhumbled and unreformed, till all the reſt of the judgments threatned in Deut. xxviii. *being brought upon them, that which in the laſt verſe of that dreadful chapter compleats the threatnings, was accompliſhed,* The Lord ſhall bring thee into Egypt again. *In this chapter we have,* 1. *A more particular account of Jeremiah's diſcharge, and his ſettlement with Gedaliah,* ver. 1,—6. 2. *The great reſort of the Jews that remained ſcattered in the neighbouring countries to Gedaliah, who was made their governor under the king of Babylon; and the good poſture they were in for a while under him,* ver. 7,—12. 3. *A treacherous deſign formed againſt Gedaliah, by Iſhmael, which we ſhall find executed in the next chapter,* ver. 13,—16.

1. THE word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, after that Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard, had let him go from Ramah, when he had taken him being bound in chains among all that were carried away captive of Jeruſalem and Judah, *which were* carried away captive unto Babylon. 2. And the captain

captain of the guard took Jeremiah, and said unto him, The LORD thy God hath pronounced this evil upon this place. 3. Now the LORD hath brought *it*, and done according as he hath said: because ye have sinned against the LORD, and have not obeyed his voice, therefore this thing is come upon you. 4. And now, behold, I loose thee this day from the chains which *were* upon thine hand: if it seem good unto thee to come with me into Babylon, come, and I will look well unto thee: but if it seem ill unto thee to come with me into Babylon, forbear: behold, all the land *is* before thee: whither it seemeth good and convenient for thee to go, thither go. 5. Now while he was not yet gone back, *he said*, Go back also to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan, whom the king of Babylon hath made governor over the cities of Judah, and dwell with him among the people: or go wheresoever it seemeth convenient unto thee to go. So the captain of the guard gave him victuals and a reward, and let him go. 6. Then went Jeremiah unto Gedaliah the son of Ahikam to Mizpah, and dwelt with him among the people *that were* left in the land.

The title of this part of the book, which begins the chapter, seems misapplied, *The word which came to Jeremiah*, for here is nothing of prophecy in this chapter, but it is to be referred to *chap.* xlii. 7. where we have a message that God sent by Jeremiah to the captains and the people that remained, and the story betwixt, and that is only to introduce that prophecy, and shew the occasion of it, that it may be the better understood; and Jeremiah being himself concerned in the story, was the better able to give an account of it.

In these verses we have Jeremiah's adhering, by the advice of Nebuzar-adan, to Gedaliah. It should seem that Jeremiah was very honourably fetched out of the court of the prison by the king of Babylon's princes, *chap.* xxxix. 15. but afterwards being found among the people in the city, when orders were given to the inferior officers to bind all they found that were of any fashion, in order to their being carried captives to Babylon, he, through ignorance and mistake, was bound among the rest, and hurried away: Poor man! he seems to have been born to hardship and abuse; *a man of sorrows* indeed! But when the captives were brought manacled to Ramah, not far off, where a council of war, or court-martial was held, for giving orders concerning them, Jeremiah was soon distinguished from the rest, and, by special order of the court, was discharged.

1. The captain of the guard solemnly owns him to be a true prophet, *ver.* 2, 3. *The Lord thy God*, whose messenger thou hast been, and in whose name thou hast spoken, *has* by thee *pronounced this evil upon this place*; they had fair warning given them of it, but they would not take the warning, and *now the Lord hath brought it*, and, as by thy mouth he said it, so by my hand *he hath done what he said*. He seems thus to justify what he had done, and to glory in it, that he had been God's instrument to fulfil that which Jeremiah had been his messenger to foretel; and upon that account it was indeed the most glorious action he had ever done. He tells all the people that were now in chains before him, it was *because ye have sinned against the Lord that this thing is come upon you*. The princes of Israel would never be brought to acknowledge this, though it was as evident as if it had been written with a sun-beam: But this heathen prince plainly sees it, that a people that had been so favoured as they had been by the divine goodness, would never have been abandoned thus, had they not been very provoking. The people of Israel had been often told this from the pulpit by their prophets, and they would not regard it; now they are told it from the bench by their conqueror, whom they dare not contradict, and who will make them regard it. Note, Sooner or later men shall be made sensible that their sin is the cause of all their miseries.

2. He gives him free leave to dispose of himself as he thought fit. He *loosed him from his chains* a second time, *ver.* 4. invited him to come along with him to Babylon, not as a captive, but as a friend, as a companion, and *I will set my eye upon thee*, so the word is; not only *I will look well to thee*, but I will shew thee respect, will countenance thee, and will see that thou be safe and well provided for: But if he were not disposed to go to Babylon, he might dwell where he pleased in his own country, for it was all now at the dispose of the conquerors: He may go to Anathoth if he please, and enjoy the field he had purchased there. A great change with this good man! He that but lately was tossed from one prison to another, may now walk at liberty from one possession to another.

3. He adviseth him to go to Gedaliah, and settle with him. This Gedaliah was *made governor of* the land under *the king of Babylon*, an honest Jew, who (it is probable) betimes went over with his friends to the Chaldeans, and approved himself so well, that he had this great trust put into his hands, *ver.* 5. *While* Jeremiah *was not yet gone back*, but stood considering what he should do, Nebuzar-adan perceiving him neither inclined to go to Babylon, nor determined whither to go, turned the scale for him, and bid him by all means *go to Gedaliah*. Sudden thoughts sometimes prove wise ones. But when he gave this counsel he did not design to oblige him by it, nor will he take it ill if he do not follow it: *Go whereſoever it seemeth convenient unto thee*. It is friendly in such cases to give advice, but unfriendly to prescribe, and to be angry if our advice be not taken. Let Jeremiah steer what course he pleaseth, Nebuzar-adan will agree to it, and believe he doth for the best. Nor doth he only give him his liberty, and an approbation of the measures he shall take, but provides for his support; he *gave him victuals, and a* present, either in clothes or money, *and* so *let him go*. See how considerate *the captain of the guard* was, in his kindness to Jeremiah: He set him at liberty, but it was in a country that was laid waste, and in which, as the posture of it now was, he might have perished, though it was his own country, if he had not thus kindly furnished him with necessaries. Jeremiah not only accepted his kindness, but took his advice, and went to Gedaliah, to Mizpah, *and dwelt with him*, ver. 6. Whether we may herein commend his prudence, I know not; the event doth not commend it, for it did not prove at all to his comfort: However, we may commend his pious affection to the land of Israel, that, unless he were forced out of it as Ezekiel, and Daniel, and other good men were, he would not forsake it; but chose rather to dwell with the poor in the holy land, than with princes in an unholy one.

7. ¶ Now when all the captains of the forces which *were* in the fields, *even* they and their men heard that the king of Babylon had made Gedaliah the son of Ahikam governor in the land, and had committed unto him men, and women, and children, and of the poor of the land, of them that were not carried away captive to Babylon; 8. Then they came to Gedaliah to Mizpah, even Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and Johanan and Jonathan the sons of Kareah, and Seraiah the son of Tanhumeth, and the sons of Ephai the Netophathite, and Jezaniah the son of a Maachathite, they and their men. 9. And Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan, sware unto them and to their men, saying, Fear not to serve the Chaldeans: dwell in the land and serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you. 10. As for me, Behold, I will dwell at Mizpah to serve the Chaldeans, which will come unto us: but ye, gather ye wine, and summer-fruits, and oil, and put *them* in your vessels, and dwell in your cities that ye have taken. 11. Likewise when all the Jews that *were* in Moab, and among the Ammonites, and in Edom, and that *were* in all the countries, heard that the king of Babylon had left a remnant of Judah, and that he had set over them Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan; 12. Even all the Jews returned out of all places whither they were driven, and came to the land of Judah, to Gedaliah unto Mizpah, and gathered wine and summer-fruits, very much. 13. ¶ Moreover, Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that *were* in the fields, came to Gedaliah to Mizpah, 14. And said unto him, Dost thou certainly know that Baalis the king of the Ammonites hath sent Ishmael the son of Nethaniah to slay thee? But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam believed them not. 15. Then Johanan the son of Kareah spake to Gedaliah in Mizpah secretly, saying, Let me go, I pray thee, and I will slay Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and no man shall know *it*: wherefore should he slay thee, that all the Jews *which are* gathered unto thee should be scattered, and the remnant of Judah perish? 16. But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam said unto Johanan the son of Kareah, Thou shalt not do this thing, for thou speakest falsly of Ishmael.

We have in these verses,

(1.) A bright sky opening upon the remnant of the Jews that were left in their own land, and a comfortable prospect given them of some peace and quietness, after the many years of trouble and terror with which they had been afflicted. Jeremiah indeed had never in his prophecies spoken of any such good days reserved for the Jews immediately after the captivity; but providence seemed to raise and encourage such an expectation, and it would be to that miserable people as life from the dead. Observe the particulars.

1. Gedaliah, one of themselves, is made *governor in the land*, by *the king of Babylon*, ver. 7. To shew that he designed to make,

make and keep them easy, he did not give this commission to one of the princes of Babylon, but to one of their brethren, who they might be sure would seek their peace. He was *the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan*, one of the princes. We read of his father, *chap.* xxvi. 24. that he took Jeremiah's part against the people. He seems to be a man of great wisdom, and a mild temper, and under whose government the few that were left might be very happy. The king of Babylon had a good opinion of him, and reposed a confidence in him, for *to him he committed all that were* left behind.

2. There is great resort to him from all parts, and all those that were now the Jews of the dispersion, came and put themselves under his government and protection. 1. The great men that had escaped the Chaldeans by force, came and quietly submitted to Gedaliah, for their own safety and common preservation. Divers are here named, *ver.* 8. *they came* with *their men*, their servants, their soldiers, and so strengthned one another; and the king of Babylon had such a good opinion of Gedaliah his delegate, that he was not at all jealous of the increase of their numbers, but rather pleased with it. 2. The poor men that had escaped by flight into the neighbouring countries of Moab, Ammon, and Edom, were induced by the love they bare to their own land, to return to it again, as soon as they heard that Gedaliah was in authority there, *ver.* 11, 12. Canaan it self would be an unsafe, unpleasant country, if there was no government or governors there, and those that loved it dearly would not come back to it till they heard there was. It would be a great reviving to them that were dispersed, to come together again; that were dispersed into foreign countries, to come together in their own country; that were under strange kings, to be under a governor of their own nation. See here in wrath God remembred mercy, and yet admitted some of them upon a further trial of their obedience.

3. The model of this new government is drawn up and settled by an original contract, which Gedaliah confirmed with an oath, a solemn oath, *ver.* 9. *He sware to them, and to their men*, it is probable, according to the warrant and instructions he had received from the king of Babylon, who empowered him to give them these assurances. 1. They must own the property of their lands to be in the Chaldeans. Come (saith Gedaliah) *Fear not to serve the Chaldeans:* Fear not the sin of it. Though the divine law had forbidden them to make leagues with the heathen, yet the divine sentence had obliged them to yield to the king of Babylon. Fear not the reproach of it, and the disparagement it will be to your nation; it is what God has brought you to, has bound you to, and it is no disgrace to any to comply with him. Fear not the consequences of it, as if it would certainly make you and yours miserable; no, you will find the king of Babylon not so hard a landlord as you apprehend him to be; if you will but live peaceably, peaceably you shall live; disturb not the government, and it will not disturb you. *Serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you.* If they should make any difficulty of doing personal homage, or should be apprehensive of danger, when the Chaldeans should come among them, Gedaliah, probably, by instruction from the king of Babylon, undertakes upon all occasions to act for them, and make their applications acceptable to the king, *ver.* 10. *As for me, behold, I will dwell at Mizpah, to serve the Chaldeans*, to do homage to them in the name of the whole body, if there be occasion, to receive orders, and to pay them their tribute when they *come to us*. All that passeth between them and the Chaldeans, shall pass through his hand; and if the Chaldeans put such a confidence in him, surely his own countrymen may venture to do it. Gedaliah is willing thus to give them the assurance of an oath, that he will do his part in protecting them, but being apt to err (as many good men are) on the charitable side, he did not require an oath from them, that they would be faithful to him, else the following mischief might have been prevented. However, protection draws allegiance, though it be not sworn; and, by joining in with Gedaliah, they did, in effect, consent to the terms of government, that they should *serve the king of Babylon*. But, 2. Though they own the property of their lands to be in the Chaldeans, yet, upon that condition, they shall have the free enjoyment of them, and all the profits of them, *ver.* 10. *Gather ye wine, and summer-fruits*, and take them for your own use, *put them in your vessels*, to be laid up for winter-store, as those do that live in a land of peace, and hope to *eat the labour of your hand*; nay, the labour of other peoples hands, for you reap what they sowed; nay, perhaps, they were the spontaneous products of that fertile soil, for which none had laboured. And accordingly we find, *ver.* 12. that they *gathered wine, and summer-fruits, very much*, such as were at present upon the ground, for their corn-harvest was over some time before Jerusalem was taken. While Gedaliah was in care for the publick safety, he left them to enjoy the advantages of the publick plenty, and, for ought appears, demanded no tribute from them; for he sought not his own profit, but the profit of many.

(2.) Here is a dark cloud gathering over this infant state, and threatning a dreadful storm. How soon is this hopeful prospect blasted! For when God begins in judgment, he will make an end. It is here intimated to us,

1. That *Baalis the king of the Ammonites* had a particular spite at Gedaliah, and was contriving to take him off, either out of malice to the nation of the Jews, whose welfare he hated the thought of, or a personal pique against Gedaliah, *ver.* 14. Some make Baalis to signify the queen mother of the king of the Ammonites, or queen dowager, as if she were the first mover of this bloody and treacherous design. One would have thought this little remnant might have been safe, when the great king of Babylon protected it, and yet it is ruined by the artifices of this petty prince or princess. Happy they that have the King of kings on their side, who can take *the wise in their own craftiness!* for the greatest earthly king cannot with all his power secure us against fraud and treachery.

2. That he employed *Ishmael, the son of Nethaniah*, as the instrument of his malice, instigated him to murther Gedaliah; and that he might have a fair opportunity to do it, directed him to go and enrol himself among his subjects, and promise him fealty. Nothing could be more barbarous than the design it self, nor more base than the method of compassing it. How wretchedly is the human nature corrupted and degenerated (even in those that pretend to the best blood) when it is capable of admitting the thought of such abominable wickedness! Ishmael was of the seed royal, and would therefore be easily tempted to envy and hate one that set up for a governor in Judah, that was not, as he was, of David's line, though he were never so much of David's spirit.

3. That Johanan, a brisk and active man, having got scent of this plot, informed Gedaliah of it, yet taking it for granted, he could not but know of it before, the proofs of the matter being so very plain. *Dost thou certainly know?* i. e. sure thou dost, *ver.* 14. He gave him private intelligence of it, *ver.* 15. hoping he would then take the more notice of it. He profered his service to prevent it, by taking off Ishmael, whose very name was ominous to all the seed of Isaac. *I will slay* him: *Wherefore should he slay thee?* Herein he shewed more courage and zeal than sense of justice; for if it be lawful to kill for prevention, who then can be safe? since malice always suspects the worst.

4. That Gedaliah, being a man of sincerity himself, would by no means give credit to the information given him of Ishmael's treachery. He said, *Thou speakest falsly of Ishmael.* Herein he discovered more good humour than discretion, more of the innocency of the dove, than the wisdom of the serpent. Princes become uneasy to themselves and all about them when they are jealous. Queen Elizabeth said, she would believe no more evil by her people, than a mother would believe by her own children; yet many have been ruined by being over-confident of the fidelity of those about them.

CHAP. XLI.

It is a very tragical story that is related in this chapter, and shews, that evil pursues sinners. *The black cloud that was gathering in the foregoing chapter, here bursts in a dreadful storm. Those few Jews that escaped the captivity, were proud to think that they were still in their own land, when their brethren were gone they knew not whither; were fond of* the wine, and summer-fruits, *they had* gathered, *and were very secure under Gedaliah's protectorship, when, on a sudden, even these remains prove ruins too.* 1. *Gedaliah is barbarously slain by Ishmael,* ver. 1, 2. 2. *All the Jews that were with him were slain likewise,* ver. 3. *and a pit filled with their dead bodies,* ver. 9. 3. *Some devout men, to the number of fourscore, that were going towards Jerusalem, were drawn in by Ishmael, and murthered likewise,* ver. 4,—7. *Only ten of them escaped,* ver. 8. 4. *Those that escaped the sword, were taken prisoners by Ishmael, and carried off towards the country of the Ammonites,* ver. 10. 5. *By the conduct and courage of Johanan, though the death of the slain is not revenged, yet the prisoners are recovered, and he now becomes their commander in chief,* ver. 11,—16. 6. *His project is to carry them into the land of Egypt,* ver. 17, 18. *which we shall hear more of in the next chapter.*

1. NOW it came to pass in the seventh month, *that* Ishmael the son of Nethaniah the son of Elishamah of the seed royal, and the princes of the king, even ten men with him, came unto Gedaliah the son of Ahikam to Mizpah, and there they did eat bread together in Mizpah. 2. Then arose Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and the ten men that were with him, and smote Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan with the sword, and slew him, whom the king of Babylon had made governor over the land. 3. Ishmael also slew all the Jews that were with him, *even* with Gedaliah at Mizpah, and the Chaldeans that were found there, *and* the men of war. 4. And it came to pass the second day after he had slain Gedaliah, and no man knew *it*, 5. That there came certain from Shechem, from Shiloh, and from Samaria, *even* fourscore men having their beards shaven, and their clothes rent, and

and having cut themſelves, with offerings and incenſe in their hand, to bring *them* to the houſe of the LORD. 6. And Iſhmael the ſon of Nethaniah went forth from Mizpah to meet them, weeping all along as he went: and it came to paſs as he met them, he ſaid unto them, Come to Gedaliah the ſon of Ahikam. 7. And it was *ſo* when they came into the midſt of the city, that Iſhmael the ſon of Nethaniah ſlew them, *and caſt them* into the midſt of the pit, he, and the men that *were* with him. 8. But ten men were found among them that ſaid unto Iſhmael, Slay us not: for we have treaſures in the field, of wheat, and of barley, and of oil, and of honey. So he forbare, and ſlew them not among their brethren. 9. Now the pit wherein Iſhmael had caſt all the dead bodies of the men (whom he had ſlain becauſe of Gedaliah) *was* it, which Aſa the king had made for fear of Baaſha king of Iſrael; *and* Iſhmael the ſon of Nethaniah filled it with *them that were* ſlain. 10. Then Iſhmael carried away captive all the reſidue of the people, that *were* in Mizpah, *even* the kings daughters, and all the people that remained in Mizpah, whom Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard had committed to Gedaliah the ſon of Ahikam, and Iſhmael the ſon of Nethaniah carried them away captive, and departed to go over to the Ammonites.

It is hard to ſay which is more aſtoniſhing, God's permitting, or men's perpetrating ſuch villainies as here we find committed. Such baſe, barbarous, bloody work is here done by men, who by their birth ſhould have been men of honour, by their religion juſt men, and this done upon thoſe of their own nature, their own nation, their own religion, and now their brethren in affliction, when they were all brought under the power of the victorious Chaldeans, and ſmarting under the judgments of God, upon no provocation, nor with any proſpect of advantage; all done, not only in cold blood, but with art and management: We have ſcarce ſuch an inſtance of perfidious cruelty in the ſcripture; ſo that with John, when he ſaw the *woman drunk with the blood of the ſaints*, we may well *wonder with great admiration*. But God permitted it for the compleating of the ruin of an unhumbled people, and the filling up of the meaſure of their judgments, who had filled up the meaſure of their iniquities. Let it poſſeſs us with an indignation at the wickedneſs of men, and an awe of God's righteouſneſs.

1. Iſhmael and his party treacherouſly killed Gedaliah himſelf in the firſt place. Though the king of Babylon had made him a great man, had given him a commiſſion to be *governor of the land* which he had conquered; though God had made him a good man, and a great bleſſing to his country, and his agency for its welfare was as life from the dead, yet neither could ſecure him. Iſhmael was of *the ſeed royal*, ver. 1. and therefore jealous of Gedaliah's growing greatneſs, and enraged that he ſhould merit and accept a commiſſion under the king of Babylon. He had *ten men* with him, that were *princes of the king* too, guided by the ſame peeviſh reſentments that he was; theſe had been with Gedaliah before, *chap.* xl. 8. to put themſelves under his protection, *chap.* xl. 8. and now came again to make him a viſit; *and they did eat bread together in Mizpah*. He entertained them generouſly, and entertained no jealouſy of them, notwithſtanding the information given him by Johanan. They pretended friendſhip to him, and gave him no warning to ſtand on his guard; he was in ſincerity friendly to them, and did all he could to oblige them, but they that did *eat bread* with him *lift up the heel* againſt him. They did not pick a quarrel with him, but watched an opportunity, when they had him alone, and aſſaſſinated him, *ver.* 2.

2. They likewiſe put all to the ſword that they found in arms there, both Jews and Chaldeans, all that were employed under Gedaliah, or were in any capacity to revenge his death, *ver.* 3. As if enough of the blood of Iſraelites had not been ſhed by the Chaldeans, their own princes here mingle it with the blood of the Chaldeans. The vine-dreſſers and the husbandmen were buſy in the fields, and knew nothing of this bloody maſſacre; ſo artfully was it carried on and concealed!

3. Some good honeſt men, that were going all in tears to lament the deſolations of Jeruſalem, were drawn in by Iſhmael, and murdered with the reſt. Obſerve, 1. From whence they came, *ver.* 5. *from Shechem, Samaria*, and *Shiloh*, places that had been famous, but were now reduced; they belonged to the ten tribes, but there were ſome in thoſe countries that retained an affection for the worſhip of the God of Iſrael. 2. Whither they were going; *to the houſe of the Lord*, the temple at Jeruſalem, which, no doubt, they had heard of the deſtruction of, and were going to pay their reſpects to its aſhes, to ſee its ruins, that their eye might affect their heart with ſorrow for them: They *favour the duſt thereof*, Pſalm cii. 14. They took *offerings and incenſe in their hand*, that if they ſhould find any altar there, though it were but an altar of earth, and any prieſt ready to officiate, they might not be without ſomething to offer; if not, yet they ſhewed their goodwill, as Abraham, when he came to *the place of the altar*, though the altar was gone. The people of God uſed to go rejoicing to the *houſe of the Lord*, but theſe went in the habit of mourners, with *their clothes rent*, and *their heads ſhaven*; for the providence of God loudly called to weeping and mourning, becauſe it was not with the faithful worſhippers of God as in months paſt. 3. How they were decoyed into a fatal ſnare by Iſhmael's malice: Hearing of their approach, he reſolved to be the death of them too; ſo blood-thirſty was he! He ſeemed as if he hated every one that had the name of an Iſraelite, or the face of an honeſt man; theſe pilgrims towards Jeruſalem he had a ſpite to, for the ſake of their errand. Iſhmael went out to meet them with crocodile's tears, pretending to bewail the deſolations of Jeruſalem as much as they, and, to try how they ſtood affected to Gedaliah and his government, he courted them into the town, and found them to have a reſpect for him, which confirmed him in his reſolution to murder them. *He ſaid, Come to Gedaliah*, pretending he would have them come and live with him, when really he intended they ſhould come and die with him, *ver.* 6. They had heard ſuch a character of Gedaliah, that they were willing enough to be acquainted with him; but Iſhmael, when he had them *in the midſt of the* town, fell upon them, and *ſlew them*, ver. 7. and, no doubt, took the offerings they had, and converted them to his own uſe; for he that would not ſtick at ſuch a murder, would not ſtick at ſacrilege. Notice is taken of his diſpoſing of the dead bodies of theſe and the reſt that he had ſlain; he tumbled them all into a great *pit*, ver. 7. the ſame pit that Aſa king of Judah had digged long before, either in the city, or adjoining to it, when he built or fortified Mizpah, 1 *Kings* xi. 22. to be a frontier gariſon againſt *Baaſha king of Iſrael*, and *for fear of* him, *ver.* 9. Note, Thoſe that dig pits with a good intention, yet know not what ill uſe they may be put to one time or other. He ſlew ſo many, that he could not afford them each a grave, or would not do them ſo much honour, but threw them all promiſcuouſly into one pit.

Among theſe laſt that were doomed to the ſlaughter, there were ten that obtained a pardon, by working, not on the compaſſion, but the covetouſneſs of thoſe that had them at their mercy, *ver.* 8. They *ſaid to Iſhmael*, when he was about to ſuck their blood, like an inſatiable horſeleech, after that of their companions, *Slay us not; for we have treaſures in the field*, i. e. country treaſures, large ſtocks upon the ground, abundance of ſuch commodities as the country affords, *wheat and barley, and oil and honey*; intimating, that they would diſcover it to him, and put him in poſſeſſion of it all, if he would ſpare them. *Skin for skin, and all that a man has will he give for his life*. This bait prevailed; Iſhmael ſaved them, not for the love of mercy, but the love of money. Here were riches kept for the owners thereof, not *to their hurt*, Eccleſ. v. 13. and to cauſe them to *loſe their lives*, Job xxxi. 39. but to their good, and the preſerving of their lives. Solomon obſerves, that ſometimes *the ranſom of a man's life is his riches*. But thoſe who think thus to bribe death, when it comes with commiſſion, and plead with it, ſaying, *Slay us not, for we have treaſures in the field*, will find death inexorable, and themſelves wretchedly deceived.

4. He carried off the people priſoners; *the king's daughters*, whom the Chaldeans cared not for troubling themſelves with, when they had the king's ſons, and the poor of the land, the vine-dreſſers and husbandmen, that were committed to Gedaliah's charge, were all led away priſoners towards the country of *the Ammonites*, ver. 10. Iſhmael, probably, intending to make a preſent of them, as the trophies of his barbarous victory, to the king of that country, that ſet him on. This melancholy ſtory is a warning to us, never to be ſecure in this world. Worſe may be yet to come then, when we think the worſt is over; and that end of one trouble, which we fancy to be the end of all trouble, may prove to be the beginning of another, of a greater. Theſe here thought, *Surely the bitterneſs of death*, and of captivity, *is paſt*; and yet ſome died by the ſword, and others went into captivity. When we think our ſelves ſafe, and begin to be eaſy, deſtruction may come that way that we little expected it. There is many a ſhip wrecked in the harbour. We can never be ſure of peace on this ſide heaven.

11. ¶ But when Johanan the ſon of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that *were* with him, heard of all the evil that Iſhmael the ſon of Nethaniah had done, 12. Then they took all the men, and went to fight with Iſhmael the ſon of Nethaniah, and found him by the great waters that *are* in Gibeon. 13. Now it came to paſs, *that* when all the people which *were* with Iſhmael ſaw Johanan the ſon of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that *were* with him, then they were glad. 14. So all the people that Iſhmael had carried away captive from Mizpah, caſt about and returned, and went unto Johanan the ſon of Kareah.

15. But Ishmael the son of Nethaniah escaped from Johanan with eight men, and went to the Ammonites. 16. Then took Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that *were* with him, all the remnant of the people whom he had recovered from Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, from Mizpah (after *that* he had slain Gedaliah the son of Ahikam) *even* mighty men of war, and the women and the children, and the eunuchs whom he had brought again from Gibeon. 17. And they departed and dwelt in the habitation of Chimham, which *is* by Bethlehem, to go to enter into Egypt, 18. Because of the Chaldeans: for they were afraid of them, because Ishmael the son of Nethaniah had slain Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, whom the king of Babylon made governor in the land.

It had been well if Johanan, when he gave information to Gedaliah of Ishmael's treasonable design, though he could not obtain leave to go kill Ishmael, and to prevent it that way, yet had stayed with Gedaliah; for he and his captains, and their forces, might have been a life-guard to Gedaliah, and a terror to Ishmael, and so have prevented the mischief, without the effusion of blood: But, it seems, they were out upon some expedition, perhaps, no good one, and so were out of the way when they should have been upon the best service. Those that affect to ramble, are many times out of their place when they are most needed. However, at length, they *hear of all the evil that Ishmael had done*, ver. 11. and are resolved to try an after-game, which we have an account of in these verses.

1. We heartily wish Johanan could have taken revenge upon the murderers, but he prevailed only to rescue the captives. They that had shed so much blood, it was pity but their blood should have been shed; and it is strange that vengeance suffered them to live; yet it did. Johanan gathered what forces he could, *and went to fight with Ishmael*, ver. 12. upon notice of the murders he had committed, (for though he concealed it for a time, *ver.* 4. yet murder will out) and which way he was gone, he pursued him, and overtook him by the great *pool of Gibeon*, which we read of, 2 *Sam.* ii. 13. And upon his appearing with such a force, Ishmael's heart failed him, his guilty conscience flew in his face, and he durst not stand his ground against an enemy that was something like a match for him. The most cruel are often the most cowardly. The poor captives *were glad when they saw Johanan*, and *the captains that were with him*, looking upon them as their deliverers, *ver.* 13. and they presently found a way to wheel about, and come over to them, *ver.* 14. Ishmael not offering to detain them when he saw Johanan. Note, Those that would be helped must help themselves. These captives stayed not till their conquerors were beaten, but took the first opportunity to make their escape, as soon as they saw their friends appear, and their enemies thereby disheartned. Ishmael quitted his prey to save his life, and *escaped with eight men*, ver. 15. It seems, two of his ten men, that were his banditti or assassines, spoken of, *ver.* 1. either overrun him, or were killed in the engagement; but he made the best of his way to the Ammonites, as a perfect renegado, that had quite abandoned all relation to the commonwealth of Israel, though he was of the seed-royal, and we hear no more of him.

2. We heartily wish that Johanan, when he had rescued the captives, would have sitten down quietly with them, and governed them peaceably, as Gedaliah did; but, instead of that, he is for leading them such a trace into the land of Egypt, as Ishmael would have led them into the land of the Ammonites; so that though he got the command over them in a better way than Ishmael did, and honestly enough, yet he did not use it much better. Gedaliah, who was of a meek and quiet spirit, was a great blessing to them; but Johanan, who was of a fierce and restless spirit, was set over them for their hurt, and to compleat their ruin, even after they were as they thought redeemed. Thus did God still walk contrary to them! 1. The resolution of Johanan and the captains was very rash; nothing would serve them but they would *go to enter into Egypt*, ver. 17. and, in order to that, they encamped for a time *in the habitation of Chimham, by Bethlehem*, David's city. Probably, it was some land which David gave to Chimham, the son of Barzillai, which, though it returned to David's family, at the year of jubilee, yet, still bore the name of Chimham. Here Johanan made his head quarters, steering his course towards Egypt, either from a personal affection to that country, or an ancient national confidence in the Egyptians for help in distress. Some of the *mighty men of war*, it seems, had escaped, those he took with him, *and the women, and children, whom he had recovered from Ishmael*, who were thus emptied from vessel to vessel, because they were yet unchanged. 2. The reason for this resolution was very frivolous. They pretended *they were afraid of the Chaldeans*, that they would come and do I know not what with them, *because Ishmael had* killed *Gedaliah*, ver. 18. I cannot think they really had any apprehensions of danger upon this account; for though it is true the Chaldeans had cause enough to resent the murder of their viceroy, yet they were not so unreasonable, or unjust, as to revenge it upon those who appeared so vigorously against the murderers: But they only make use of this as a sham to cover that corrupt inclination of their unbelieving ancestors, which was so strong in them *to return into Egypt*. Those will justly lose their comfort in real fears, that excuse themselves in sin with pretended fears.

CHAP. XLII.

Johanan and the captains being strongly bent upon going into Egypt, either their affections or politicks advising them to take that course, they had a great desire that God should direct them to do so too; like Balaam, who, when he was determined to go curse Israel, asked God leave. Here is, 1. *The fair bargain that was made between Jeremiah and them, about consulting God in this matter,* ver. 1,—6. 2. *The message at large which God sent them, in answer to their enquiry; in which,* (1.) *They are commanded and encouraged to continue in the land of Judah, and assured, that if they did so, it should be well with them,* ver. 7,—12. (2.) *They are forbidden to go to Egypt, and are plainly told that if they did it would be their ruin,* ver. 13,—18. (3.) *They are charged with dissimulation in their asking what God's will was in this matter, and disobedience when they were told what it was; and sentence is passed upon them for it,* ver. 19,—22.

1. THEN all the captains of the forces, and Johanan the son of Kareah, and Jezaniah the son of Hoshaiah, and all the people from the least even unto the greatest, came near, 2. And said unto Jeremiah the prophet, Let, we beseech thee, our supplication be accepted before thee, and pray for us unto the LORD thy God, *even* for all this remnant, (for we are left *but* a few of many, as thine eyes do behold us) 3. That the LORD thy God may shew us the way wherein we may walk, and the thing that we may do. 4. Then Jeremiah the prophet said unto them, I have heard *you*; behold, I will pray unto the LORD your God according to your words, and it shall come to pass, *that* whatsoever thing the LORD shall answer you, I will declare *it* unto you: I will keep nothing back from you. 5. Then they said to Jeremiah, The LORD be a true and faithful witness between us, if we do not even according to all things for the which the LORD thy God shall send thee to us. 6. Whether *it be* good, or whether *it be* evil, we will obey the voice of the LORD our God, to whom we send thee; that it may be well with us, when we obey the voice of the LORD our God.

We have reason to wonder how Jeremiah the prophet escaped the sword of Ishmael, it seems he did, and it was not the first time that the Lord hid him. It is strange also that in these violent turns he was not consulted before now, and his advice asked and taken. But it should seem as if they knew not that a prophet was among them; though this people were *as brands plucked out of the fire*, yet have they not *returned to the Lord:* This people has a *revolting and a rebellious heart*; and contempt of God and his providence, God and his prophets, is still *the sin that most easily besets* them. But now at length, to serve a turn, Jeremiah is hearkned out, and *all the captains, Johanan* himself not excepted, with *all the people from the least to the greatest*, make him a visit; they *came near*, ver. 1. which intimates, that hitherto they had kept at a distance from the prophet, and had been shy of him. Now here,

1. They desire him by prayer to ask direction from God what they should do in the present critical juncture, *ver.* 2, 3. They express themselves wonderful well, (1.) With great respect to the prophet. Though he was poor and low, and under their command, yet they apply themselves to him with humility and submissiveness, as petitioners for his assistance, which yet they intimate their own unworthiness of: *Let, we beseech thee, our supplication be accepted before thee.* They compliment him thus, in hopes to perswade him to say as they would have him say. (2.) With a great opinion of his interest in heaven. *Pray for us*, who know not how to pray for our selves: *Pray to the Lord thy God*, for we are unworthy to call him ours, nor have we reason to expect any favour from him. (3.) With a great sense of their need of divine direction; they speak of themselves as objects of compassion, *we are but a remnant, but a few of many*; how easily will such a remnant be swallowed up, and yet it is pity it should. *Thine eyes* see what distress we are in, what a plunge we are at; if thou canst do any thing, help us. (4.) With desire of a divine conduct: Let *the Lord thy God* take this ruin into his thoughts, and under his hand, and *shew us the way wherein we may walk*, and may expect to have his presence with us, *and the thing that we may do*, the course we may take for our own safety. Note, In every

every difficult, doubtful caſe, our eye muſt be up to God for direction: They then might expect to be directed by a *ſpirit of prophecy*, which is now ceaſed; but we may ſtill in faith pray to be guided by a *ſpirit of wiſdom* in our hearts, and the hints of providence.

2. Jeremiah faithfully promiſeth them to pray for direction for them, and whatever meſſage God ſhould ſend to them by him, he would deliver it to them juſt as he received it, without adding, altering, or diminiſhing, *ver.* 4. Miniſters may hence learn, 1. Conſcientiouſly to pray for thoſe who deſire their prayers: *I will pray for you, according to your words.* Though they had ſlighted him, yet, like Samuel, when he was ſlighted, he will not *ſin againſt the Lord, in ceaſing to pray for* them, 1 *Sam.* xii. 23. 2. Conſcientiouſly to adviſe thoſe who deſire their advice, as near as they can to the mind of God, not *keeping back any thing that is profitable for them*, whether it be pleaſing or no, but to *declare to them the whole counſel of God*, that they may approve themſelves true to their truſt.

3. They fairly promiſe, that they will be governed by the will of God, as ſoon as they know what it is, *ver.* 5, 6. and they had the impudence to appeal to God concerning their ſincerity herein, though at the ſame time they diſſembled: *The Lord be a true and faithful witneſs between us*, i. e. do thou in the fear of God tell us truly what his mind is, and then we will in the fear of God comply with it; and for this, the Lord the Judge be judge between us. Note, Thoſe that expect to have the benefit of good miniſters prayers, muſt conſcientiouſly hearken to their preaching, and be governed by it, as far as it agrees with the mind of God. Nothing could be better ſaid than this here, *Whether it be good, or whether it be evil, we will obey the voice of the Lord our God, that it may be well with us.* 1. They now call God their God, for Jeremiah had encouraged them to call him ſo, *ver.* 5. *I will pray to the Lord your God.* He is ours, and therefore *we will obey his voice.* Our relation to God ſtrongly obligeth us to obedience. 2. They promiſe to *obey his voice*, becauſe they ſent the prophet to him to conſult him. Note, We do not truly deſire to know the mind of God, if we do not fully reſolve to comply with it when we do know it. 3. It is an implicit univerſal obedience that they here promiſe: They will do what God appoints them to do, *whether it be good, or whether it be evil:* Though it may ſeem evil to us, yet we will believe that if God commands it, it is certainly good, and we muſt not diſpute it, but do it. Whatever God commands, whether it be eaſy or difficult, agreeable to our inclinations, or contrary to them, whether it be cheap or coſtly, faſhionable or unfaſhionable, whether we get or loſe by it in our worldly intereſts, if it be our duty, we will do it. 4. It is upon a very good conſideration that they promiſe this, a reaſonable and powerful one, *that it may be well with us*; which intimates a conviction that they could not expect it ſhould be well with them upon any other terms.

7. ¶ And it came to paſs after ten days, that the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah. 8. Then called he Johanan the ſon of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces which *were* with him, and all the people from the leaſt even to the greateſt, 9. And ſaid unto them, Thus ſaith the LORD the God of Iſrael, unto whom ye ſent me to preſent your ſupplication before him, 10. If ye will ſtill abide in this land, then will I build you, and not pull *you* down, and I will plant you, and not pluck *you* up: for I repent me of the evil that I have done unto you. 11. Be not afraid of the king of Babylon, of whom ye are afraid: be not afraid of him, ſaith the LORD: for I *am* with you to ſave you, and to deliver you from his hand. 12. And I will ſhew mercies unto you, that he may have mercy upon you, and cauſe you to return to your own land. 13. ¶ But if ye ſay, We will not dwell in this land, neither obey the voice of the LORD your God, 14. Saying, No, but we will go into the land of Egypt, where we ſhall ſee no war, nor hear the ſound of the trumpet, nor have hunger of bread, and there will we dwell: 15. (And now therefore hear the word of the LORD, ye remnant of Judah, Thus ſaith the LORD of hoſts the God of Iſrael, If ye wholly ſet your faces to enter into Egypt, and go to ſojourn there) 16. Then it ſhall come to paſs, *that* the ſword which ye feared, ſhall overtake you there in the land of Egypt, and the famine whereof ye were afraid, ſhall follow cloſe after you there in Egypt, and there ye ſhall die. 17. So ſhall it be with all the men that ſet their faces to go into Egypt to ſojourn there, they ſhall die by the ſword, by the famine, and by the peſtilence: and none of them ſhall remain or eſcape from the evil that I will bring upon them. 18. For thus ſaith the LORD of hoſts the God of Iſrael, As mine anger and my fury hath been poured forth upon the inhabitants of Jeruſalem; ſo ſhall my fury be poured forth upon you, when ye ſhall enter into Egypt: and ye ſhall be an execration, and an aſtoniſhment, and a curſe, and a reproach, and ye ſhall ſee this place no more. 19. ¶ The LORD hath ſaid concerning you, O ye remnant of Judah, Go ye not into Egypt: know certainly, that I have admoniſhed you this day. 20. For ye diſſembled in your hearts, when ye ſent me unto the LORD your God, ſaying, Pray for us unto the LORD our God, and according unto all that the LORD our God ſhall ſay, ſo declare unto us, and we will do *it*. 21. And *now* I have this day declared *it* to you, but ye have not obeyed the voice of the LORD your God, nor any *thing* for the which he hath ſent me unto you. 22. Now therefore know certainly, that ye ſhall die by the ſword, by the famine, and by the peſtilence, in the place whither ye deſire to go, *and* to ſojourn.

We have here the anſwer which Jeremiah was ſent to deliver to thoſe who employed him to ask counſel of God.

1. It did not come preſently, not till *ten days after*, ver. 7. They were thus long held in ſuſpence, perhaps, to puniſh them for their hypocriſy, or to ſhew that Jeremiah did not ſpeak of himſelf, nor what he would, for he could not ſpeak when he would, but muſt wait for inſtructions. However, it teacheth us to continue waiting upon God for direction in our way; *The viſion is for an appointed time, and at the end it ſhall ſpeak.*

2. When it did come he delivered it publickly, both to the *captains*, and to all the *people*, from the meaneſt to thoſe in the higheſt ſtation; he delivered it fully and faithfully, as he received it, as he had promiſed that he would keep nothing back from them. If Jeremiah had been to direct them by his own prudence, perhaps he could not have told what to adviſe them to, the caſe was ſo difficult; but what he has to adviſe is what *the Lord God of Iſrael ſaith*, to whom they had ſent him, and therefore they were bound in honour and duty to obſerve it. And this he tells them,

(1.) That it is the will of God that they ſhould ſtay where they were; and his promiſe, that if they do ſo it ſhall undoubtedly be *well with them*; he would have them ſtill to *abide in this land*, ver. 10. Their brethren were forced out of it into captivity, and it was their affliction; let them therefore count it a mercy that they may ſtay in it, and a duty to ſtay in it. Let thoſe whoſe lot is in Canaan, never quit it while they can keep it. It had been enough to oblige them, if God had only ſaid, I charge you, upon your allegiance, to *abide ſtill in the land*; but he rather perſwades them to it as a Friend, than commands it as a Prince.

1. He expreſſeth a very tender concern for them in their preſent calamitous condition; *It repenteth me of the evil that I have done unto you.* Though they had ſhewn ſmall ſign of their repenting of their ſins, yet God, as one *grieved for the miſery of Iſrael*, Judg. x. 16. begins to repent of the judgments he had brought upon them for their ſins. Not that he changed his mind, but he was very ready to change his way, and to return in mercy to them. God's time to repent himſelf concerning his ſervants, is when he ſees that, as here, their ſtrength is gone, and *there is none ſhut up or left*, Deut. xxxii. 36.

2. He anſwers the argument they had againſt *abiding in this land*; they *feared the king of Babylon*, chap. xli. 18. leſt he ſhould avenge the death of Gedaliah upon them, though they were no way acceſſory to it, nay, had witneſſed againſt it. The ſurmiſe was foreign and unreaſonable; but if there had been any ground for it, enough is here ſaid to remove it, *ver.* 11. *Be not afraid of the king of Babylon*, though he is a man of great might and little mercy, and a very arbitrary prince, whoſe will is a law, and therefore you are afraid he will, upon this pretence, though without colour of reaſon, take advantage againſt you: *Be not afraid of him*, for that fear will bring a ſnare; fear not him, for *I am with you*; and if God be for you to ſave you, who can be againſt you to hurt you? Thus has God provided to obviate and ſilence even the cauſeleſs fears of his people, which diſcourage them in the way of their duty; there is enough in the promiſes to do it.

3. He aſſures them, that if they will ſtill abide in this land, they ſhall not only be ſafe from the king of Babylon, but be made happy by the King of kings: *I will build you and plant you*; you ſhall take root again, and be the new foundation of another ſtate; a phœnix-kingdom riſing out of the aſhes of the laſt. It is added, *ver.* 12. *I will ſhew mercies unto you.* Note, In all our comforts we may read God's mercies. God will ſhew them mercy in this, that not only the king of Babylon ſhall not deſtroy them, but he ſhall *have mercy upon them*, and help to ſettle them. Note, Whatever kindneſs men do us, we muſt attribute it to God's kindneſs. He makes thoſe whom he pities, to be pitied, even by *thoſe that carried*

carried them captives, Pſal. cvi. 46. The king of Babylon having now the diſpoſal of the country, ſhall *cauſe you to return to your own land*, i. e. ſhall ſettle you again in your own habitations, and put you in poſſeſſion of the lands that formerly belonged to you. Note, God has made that our duty which is really our privilege, and our obedience will be its own recompence. *Abide in this land*, and it ſhall be your own land again, and you ſhall continue in it. Do not out-run it, now you ſtand ſo fair for the enjoyment of it again. Be not ſo unwiſe, as to *forſake your own mercies* for *lying vanities*.

(2.) That as they tender the favour of God and their own happineſs, they muſt by no means think of going into Egypt; not thither, of any place, not to that land out of which God had delivered their fathers, and which he had ſo often warned them not to make alliance with, nor to put confidence in. Obſerve here,

1. The ſin they are ſuppoſed to be guilty of, and to him that knew their hearts it was more than a ſuppoſition. You begin to ſay, *We will not dwell in this land*, ver. 13. we will never think that we can be ſafe in it, no, not though God himſelf undertake our protection; we will not continue in it, no, not *in obedience to the voice of the Lord our God*; He may ſay what he pleaſeth, but we will do what we pleaſe: We will *go into the land of Egypt*, and *there will we dwell*, whether God give us leave, and go along with us, or no, *ver.* 14. It is ſuppoſed that their hearts were upon it; *If ye wholly ſet your faces to enter into Egypt*, are obſtinately reſolved that ye will go and *ſojourn there*, though God oppoſe you in it, both by his word and by his providence, then take what follows. Now the reaſon they go upon in this reſolution is, that *in Egypt we ſhall ſee no war, nor have hunger of bread*, as we have had a long time in this land, *ver.* 14. Note, It is folly to quit our place, eſpecially to quit the holy land, becauſe we meet with trouble in it; but greater folly to think, by changing our place to out-run the judgments of God, and that evil which purſues ſinners in every way of diſobedience, and which there is no eſcaping, but by returning to our allegiance.

2. The ſentence paſſed upon them for this ſin, if they will perſiſt in it: It is pronounced in God's name, *ver.* 15. *Hear the word of the Lord, ye remnant of Judah*, that think becauſe you are a remnant you muſt be ſpared of courſe, *ver.* 2. and indulged in your own humour. (1.) Did the ſword and famine frighten them? Thoſe very judgments ſhall purſue them into Egypt, ſhall overtake them and overcome them there, *ver.* 16, 17. ye think becauſe war and famine have long been raging in this land, they are entialed upon it; whereas if you truſt in God, he can make even this land a land of peace to you; you think they are confined to it, and if you can get clear of this land, you ſhall get out of the reach of them, but God will ſend them after you wherever you go. Note, The evils we think to eſcape by ſin, we certainly and inevitably run ourſelves upon. The men that go to Egypt in contradiction to God's will, to eſcape *the ſword and famine*, ſhall *die in Egypt by ſword and famine*. We may apply it to the common calamities of human life; thoſe that are impatient of them, and think to avoid them by changing their place, will find they are deceived, and they do not at all mend themſelves; the grievances common to men, will meet them wherever they go; all our removes in this world, are but from one wilderneſs to another; ſtill we are where we were. (2.) Did the deſolations of Jeruſalem frighten them? Were they willing to get as far as they could from them? They ſhall meet with the ſecond part of them too in Egypt, *ver.* 18. *As my anger and fury have been poured out* here upon Jeruſalem, ſo it ſhall be *poured out upon you in Egypt*. Note, Thoſe that have, by ſin, made God their enemy, will find him a conſuming fire wherever they go. And then ye ſhall be *an execration and an aſtoniſhment*. The Hebrews were of old an abomination to the Egyptians, *Gen.* xliii. 32. and now they ſhall be made more ſo than ever. When God's profeſſing people mingle themſelves with infidels, and make their court to them, they loſe their dignity, and make themſelves a reproach.

3. That God knew their hypocriſy in their enquiries of him, and that when they asked what he would have them to do, they were reſolved to take their own way, and therefore the ſentence which was before pronounced conditionally, is made abſolute. Having ſet before them good and evil, the bleſſing and the curſe, in the cloſe he makes application of what he had ſaid. And here, (1.) He ſolemnly proteſts that he had faithfully delivered his meſſage, *ver.* 19. The concluſion of the whole matter is, *Go not down into Egypt*, you diſobey the command of God if you do, and what I have ſaid to you will be a witneſs againſt you; for *know certainly*, that *whether you will hear, or whether you will forbear*, I have plainly *admoniſhed you*, you cannot plead ignorance of the mind of God. (2.) He chargeth them with baſe diſſimulation in the application they made to him for divine direction, *ver.* 20. *Ye diſſembled in your hearts*, you pretended one thing and intended another, and promiſed what you never intended to perform; *you have uſed deceit againſt your ſouls*; ſo the margin reads it: for thoſe that think to put a cheat upon God, will prove, in the end, to have put a damning cheat upon themſelves. (3.) He is already aware that they are determined to go contrary to the command of God; probably they diſcovered it in their countenance and ſecret mutterings already, before he had finiſhed his diſcourſe. However, he ſpake from him who knew their hearts, *Ye have not obeyed the voice of the Lord your God*, i. e. ye have not a diſpoſition to obey it. Thus Moſes, in the cloſe of his farewel ſermon, had told them, *Deut.* xxxi. 2. *I know thy rebellion and thy ſtiff neck*— and *that ye will corrupt your ſelves*. Admire the patience of God, that he is pleaſed to ſpeak to thoſe whom he knows will not regard him, and deal with thoſe who, he knows, will *deal treacherouſly*, Iſa. xlviii. 8. (4.) He therefore reads them their doom, ratifying what he had ſaid before, *Know certainly that ye ſhall die by the ſword*, ver. 22. God's threatnings may be vilified, but cannot be nullified by the unbelief of man. *Famine and peſtilence* ſhall purſue theſe ſinners; for there is no place privileged from divine arreſts, nor can any malefactors go out of God's juriſdiction. *Ye ſhall die in the place whither ye deſire to go.* Note, We know not what is good for ourſelves, and that often proves afflictive, and ſometimes fatal, which we are moſt fond of, and have our hearts moſt ſet upon.

CHAP. XLIII.

Jeremiah had faithfully delivered his meſſage from God in the foregoing chapter, and the caſe was made ſo very plain by it, that one would have thought there needed no more words about it, but we find it quite otherwiſe. Here is, 1. *The peoples contempt of this meſſage; they denied it to be the word of God,* ver. 1,—3. *and then made no difficulty of going directly contrary to it. Into Egypt they went, and took Jeremiah himſelf along with them,* ver. 4,—7. 2. *God's purſuit of them with another meſſage, foretelling the king of Babylon's purſuit of them into Egypt,* ver. 8,—13.

1. AND it came to paſs, *that* when Jeremiah had made an end of ſpeaking unto all the people, all the words of the LORD their God, for which the LORD their God had ſent him to them, *even* all theſe words, 2. Then ſpake Azariah the ſon of Hoſhaiah, and Johanan the ſon of Kareah, and all the proud men, ſaying unto Jeremiah, Thou ſpeakeſt falſly: the LORD our God hath not ſent thee to ſay, Go not into Egypt to ſojourn there. 3. But Baruch the ſon of Neriah ſetteth thee on againſt us, for to deliver us into the hand of the Chaldeans, that they might put us to death, and carry us away captives into Babylon. 4. So Johanan the ſon of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces, and all the people, obeyed not the voice of the LORD, to dwell in the land of Judah. 5. But Johanan the ſon of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces, took all the remnant of Judah, that were returned from all nations whither they had been driven, to dwell in the land of Judah; 6. *Even* men, and women, and children, and the kings daughters, and every perſon that Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard had left with Gedaliah the ſon of Ahikam the ſon of Shaphan, and Jeremiah the prophet, and Baruch the ſon of Neriah. 7. So they came into the land of Egypt: for they obeyed not the voice of the LORD; thus came they, *even* to Tahpanhes.

What God ſaid to the builders of Babel may be truly ſaid of this people that Jeremiah is now dealing with, *Now nothing will be reſtrained from them which they have imagined to do*, Gen. xi. 6. They have a fancy for Egypt, and to Egypt they will go, whatever God himſelf ſaith to the contrary. Jeremiah made them hear all he had to ſay, though he ſaw them uneaſy at it, it was what the Lord their God had ſent him to ſpeak to them, and they ſhall have it all. And now let us ſee what they have to ſay to it.

1. They deny it to be a meſſage from God. *Johanan, and all the proud men, ſaid to Jeremiah, thou ſpeakeſt falſly*, ver. 2. See here, (1.) What was the cauſe of their diſobedience, it was pride, only by that comes *contention* both with God and man: they were *proud men* that gave the lie to the prophet. They could not bear the contradiction of their ſentiments, and the control of their deſigns, no not by the divine wiſdom, by the divine will itſelf. Pharaoh ſaid, *Who is the Lord that I ſhould obey him?* Exod. v. 2. The proud unhumbled heart of man is one of the moſt daring enemies God has on this ſide hell. (2.) What was the colour for their diſobedience? They would not acknowledge it to be the word of God: *The Lord hath not ſent thee* on this errand to us. Either they were not convinced that what was ſaid came from God, or (which I rather think) though they were convinced of it, they would not own it. The light ſhone ſtrong in their face, but either they ſhut their eyes againſt it, or would not confeſs that they ſaw it. Note, The reaſon why men deny the ſcriptures to be the word of God, is, becauſe they are reſolved not to conform themſelves

ſelves to ſcripture rules, and ſo an obſtinate infidelity is made the ſorry ſubterfuge of a wilful diſobedience. If God had ſpoken to them by an angel, or as he did from mount Sinai, they would have ſaid it was a deluſion. Had they not conſulted Jeremiah as a prophet? Had not he waited to receive inſtructions from God what to ſay to them? Had not what he ſaid all the uſual marks of propheſy upon it? Was not the prophet himſelf embarked in the ſame bottom with them? What intereſts could he have ſeparate from theirs? Had he not always approved himſelf an Iſraelite indeed? And had not God proved him a prophet indeed? Had any of his words ever fallen to the ground? Why truly, they had ſome good thoughts of Jeremiah, but they ſuggeſt, *ver.* 3. *Baruch ſets thee on againſt us.* A likely thing, that Baruch ſhould be in a plot to *deliver them into the hands of the Chaldeans*; and what would he get by that? If Jeremiah and he had been ſo well affected to the Chaldeans as they would repreſent them, they would have gone away at firſt, with Nebuzar-adan, when he courted them, to Babylon, and not have ſtaid to take their lot with this deſpiſed ungrateful remnant. But the beſt ſervices are no fences againſt malice and ſlander. Or, if Baruch had been ſo ill diſpoſed, could they think Jeremiah would be ſo influenced by him as to make God's name and authority to patronize ſo villainous a purpoſe? Note, Thoſe that are reſolved to contradict the great ends of the miniſtry, are induſtrious to put it into an ill name. When men will perſiſt in ſin, they repreſent thoſe that would turn them from it as deſigning men for themſelves, nay, as ill-deſigning men againſt their neighbours: It is well for them that their *witneſs* is *in* heaven, and their *record on high.*

2. They determine to go to Egypt however. They reſolve not to *dwell in the land of Judah*, as God had ordered them, *ver.* 4. but to go themſelves, with one conſent, and to take all that they had under their power along with them to Egypt. Thoſe that came *from all the nations whither they had been driven, to dwell in the land of Judah*, out of a ſincere affection to that land, they would not leave them to their liberty, but forced them to go with them into Egypt, *ver.* 5. *men, women, and children*, ver. 6. a long journey into a ſtrange country, an idolatrous country, a country that had never been kind or faithful to Iſrael, yet thither they would go, though they deſerted their own land, and threw themſelves out of God's protection. It is the folly of men that they know not when they are well, and often ruin themſelves by endeavouring to mend themſelves: and it is the pride of great men to force thoſe they have under their power to follow them, though never ſo much againſt their duty and intereſt. Theſe proud men compelled even Jeremiah the prophet and Baruch his ſcribe, to go along with them to Egypt; they carried them away as priſoners, partly to puniſh them, and a greater puniſhment they could not inflict upon them, than to force them againſt their conſciences; theirs is the worſt of tyranny, who ſay to mens ſouls, even to good mens ſouls, *Bow down, that we may go over*; partly to put ſome reputation upon themſelves and their own way; though the prophets were under a force, they would make the world believe they were voluntary in going along with them: And who can blame them for acting contrary to the word of the Lord, when the prophets themſelves did? They *came to Tahpanhes*, a famous city of Egypt, ſo called from a queen of that name, 1 *Kings* xi. 19. the ſame with Hanes, *Iſa.* xxx. 4. it was now the metropolis, for Pharaoh's houſe was there, *ver.* 9. no place could ſerve theſe proud men to ſettle in but the royal city, and near the court; ſo little mindful were they of Joſeph's wiſdom, who would have his brethren ſettle in Goſhen. If they had had the ſpirit of Iſraelites, they would have choſen rather to dwell in the wilderneſs of Judah, than in the moſt pompous populous cities of Egypt.

8. ¶ Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah in Tahpanhes, ſaying, 9. Take great ſtones in thine hand, and hide them in the clay in the brick-kiln, which *is* at the entry of Pharaohs houſe in Tahpanhes, in the ſight of the men of Judah: 10. And ſay unto them, Thus ſaith the LORD of hoſts the God of Iſrael, Behold, I will ſend and take Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon my ſervant, and will ſet his throne upon theſe ſtones that I have hid, and he ſhall ſpread his royal pavilion over them. 11. And when he cometh, he ſhall ſmite the land of Egypt, *and deliver* ſuch *as are* for death, to death; and ſuch *as are* for captivity, to captivity; and ſuch *as are* for the ſword, to the ſword. 12. And I will kindle a fire in the houſes of the gods of Egypt, and he ſhall burn them, and carry them away captives, and he ſhall aray himſelf with the land of Egypt, as a ſhepherd putteth on his garment, and he ſhall go forth from thence in peace. 13. He ſhall break alſo the images of Beth-ſhemeſh, that *is* in the land of Egypt; and the houſes of the gods of the Egyptians ſhall he burn with fire.

We have here Jeremiah propheſying in Egypt, and ſo we have in the next chapter. Jeremiah was now in Tahpanhes, for there his lords and maſters were: he was there among idolatrous Egyptians and treacherous Iſraelites; but there, (1.) He *received the word of the Lord*; it *came to him.* God can find his people, with the viſits of his grace, wherever they are; and when his miniſters are bound, yet the word of the Lord is not bound. The ſpirit of prophecy was not confined to the land of Iſrael. When Jeremiah went into Egypt, not out of choice, but by conſtraint, God withdrew not his wonted favour from him. (2.) What he received of the Lord he delivered to the people. Wherever we are we muſt endeavour to do good, for that is our buſineſs in this world.

Now we find two meſſages which Jeremiah was appointed and entruſted to deliver, when he was in Egypt. We may ſuppoſe he did what ſervices he could to his countrymen in Egypt, at leaſt as far as they would be acceptable, in performing the ordinary duties of a prophet, praying for them, and inſtructing and comforting them, but only two meſſages of his which he received immediately from God, are recorded: one in this chapter relating to Egypt itſelf, and foretelling the deſtruction of that; the other in the next chapter, relating to the Jews in Egypt.

God had told them before, that if they went into Egypt, the ſword they feared ſhould follow them; here he tells them further, that the ſword of Nebuchadrezzar, which they were in a particular manner afraid of, ſhould follow them.

1. This is foretold by a ſign: Jeremiah muſt take *great ſtones*, ſuch as are uſed for foundations, and *lay them in the clay of the the* furnace, or *brick-kiln*, which is in *the open way*, or *beſide the way* that leads *to Pharaoh's houſe*, ver. 9. ſome remarkable place in view of the royal palace. Egypt was famous for *brick-kilns*, witneſs the ſlavery of the Iſraelites there, whom they forced to make bricks, *Exod.* v. 7. which, perhaps, was now remembred againſt them. The foundation of Egypt's deſolation was laid in thoſe brick-kilns, in *that clay.* This he muſt do, not in the ſight of the Egyptians, they knew not Jeremiah's character, but *in the ſight of the men of Judah*, to whom he was ſent, that ſince he could not prevent their going into Egypt, he might bring them to repent of their going.

2. It is foretold in expreſs words, as expreſs as can be,

(1.) That the king, the preſent king of Babylon, Nebuchadrezzar, the very ſame that had been employed in the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, ſhould come in perſon againſt the land of Egypt, ſhould make himſelf maſter even of this royal city, by the ſame token that he ſhould *ſet his throne* in that very place where *theſe ſtones* were laid, *ver.* 10. This minute circumſtance is particularly foretold, that when it was accompliſhed, they might be put in mind of the prophecy, and confirmed in their belief of the extent and certainty of the divine preſcience; to which the ſmalleſt and moſt contingent events are evident. God calls Nebuchadrezzar *his ſervant*, becauſe herein he executed God's will, accompliſhed his purpoſes, and was inſtrumental to carry on his deſigns. Note, The world's princes are God's ſervants, and he makes what uſe he pleaſeth of them, and even thoſe that know him not, nor aim at his honour, yet are the tools which his providence makes uſe of.

(2.) That he ſhould deſtroy many of the Egyptians, and have them all at his mercy, *ver.* 11. *He ſhall ſmite the land of Egypt*, and though it has been always a warlike nation, yet none ſhall be able to make head againſt him, but whom he will he ſhall ſlay, and by what ſort of death he will, whether peſtilence, for that is here meant by *death*, as *chap.* xv. 2. by ſhutting them up in places infected, or by the ſword of war, or juſtice, in cold blood, or hot. And whom he will he ſhall *ſave alive* and carry into *captivity*. The Jews by going into Egypt brought the Chaldeans thither, and ſo made but ill payment to thoſe that entertained them. They who promiſed to protect Iſrael from the king of Babylon, expoſed themſelves to him.

(3.) That he ſhall deſtroy *the idols of Egypt*, both the temples, and the images of *their gods*, ver. 12. *He ſhall burn the houſes of the gods of Egypt*, but it ſhall be with a fire of God's kindling; the fire of God's wrath faſtens upon them, and then he burns ſome of them, and carries others captives, *Iſa.* xlvi. 1. *Beth-ſhemeſh*, or *the houſe of the ſun*, was ſo called from a temple there built to the ſun, where, at certain times, there was a general meeting of the worſhippers of the ſun. The ſtatues, or ſtanding images there he ſhall *break in pieces*, ver. 13. and carry away the rich materials of them. It intimates, That he ſhall lay all waſte, when even the temple and the images ſhall not eſcape the fury of the victorious army. The king of Babylon was himſelf a great idolater, and a patron of idolatry, he had his temples and images in honour of the ſun, as well as the Egyptians, and yet he is employed to deſtroy the idols of Egypt. Thus God ſometimes makes one wicked man, or nation, a ſcourge and plague to another.

(4.) That he ſhall make himſelf maſter of the land of Egypt, and none ſhall be able to plead its cauſe, or avenge its quarrel, *ver.* 12. *He ſhall aray himſelf with the rich ſpoils of the land of Egypt*, both beautify and fortify himſelf with them, ſhall aray himſelf with them, as ornaments, and as armour, and this, though it ſhall be a rich and heavy booty, yet being expert in war, and expeditious, he ſhall ſlip on with as much eaſe, and in as little time,

in compariſon, *as a ſhepherd ſlips on his garment*, when he goes to turn out his ſheep in a morning. And being loaded with the wealth of many other nations, the fruits of his conqueſts, he ſhall make no more of the ſpoils of the land of Egypt, than of a ſhepherd's coat. And when he has taken what he pleaſeth, as Benhadad threatned to do. 1 *Kings* xx. 6. he ſhall *go forth in peace*, without any moleſtation given him, or any precipitation for fear of it, ſo effectually reduced ſhall the land of Egypt be. This deſtruction of Egypt by the king of Babylon is foretold, *Ezek.* xxix. 19. and xxx. 10. Babylon lay at a great diſtance from Egypt, and yet from thence the deſtruction of Egypt comes; for God can make thoſe judgments ſtrike home which are far fetched.

CHAP. XLIV.

In this chapter we have, (1.) An awakening ſermon which Jeremiah preached to the Jews in Egypt, to reprove them for their Idolatry, notwithſtanding the warnings given them both by the word and rod of God, and to threaten the judgments of God againſt them for it, ver. 1,—14. *(2.) The impudent and impious contempt which the people put upon this admonition, and their declared reſolution to perſiſt in their idolatries notwithſtanding, in deſpite of God, and Jeremiah*, ver. 15,—19. *(3.) The ſentence paſſed upon them for their obſtinacy, that they ſhould all be cut off and periſh in Egypt, except a very ſmall number; and as a ſign or earneſt of it, the king of Egypt ſhould ſhortly fall into the hands of the king of Babylon, and be unable any longer to protect them*, ver. 20,—30.

1. THE word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the Jews which dwell in the land of Egypt, which dwell at Migdol, and at Tahpanhes, and at Noph, and in the country of Pathros, ſaying, 2. Thus ſaith the LORD of hoſts, the God of Iſrael, Ye have ſeen all the evil that I have brought upon Jeruſalem, and upon all the cities of Judah; and behold, this day they *are* a deſolation, and no man dwelleth therein. 3. Becauſe of their wickedneſs which they have committed to provoke me to anger, in that they went to burn incenſe, *and* to ſerve other gods whom they knew not, *neither* they, you, nor your fathers. 4. Howbeit, I ſent unto you all my ſervants the prophets, riſing early and ſending *them*, ſaying, O do not this abominable thing that I hate. 5. But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear to turn from their wickedneſs, to burn no incenſe unto other gods. 6. Wherefore my fury and mine anger was poured forth, and was kindled in the cities of Judah, and in the ſtreets of Jeruſalem, and they are waſted *and* defolate, as at this day. 7. Therefore now thus ſaith the LORD, the God of hoſts, the God of Iſrael, Wherefore commit ye *this* great evil againſt your ſouls, to cut off from you man and woman, child and ſuckling out of Judah, to leave you none to remain; 8. In that ye provoke me unto wrath with the works of your hands, burning incenſe unto other gods in the land of Egypt, whither ye be gone to dwell, that ye might cut your ſelves off, and that ye might be a curſe, and a reproach among all the nations of the earth? 9. Have ye forgotten the wickedneſs of your fathers, and the wickedneſs of the kings of Judah, and the wickedneſs of their wives, and your own wickedneſs, and the wickedneſs of your wives, which they have committed in the land of Judah, and in the ſtreets of Jeruſalem? 10. They are not humbled *even* unto this day, neither have they feared nor walked in my law, nor in my ſtatutes, that I ſet before you, and before your fathers. 11. ¶ Therefore thus ſaith the LORD of hoſts, the God of Iſrael, Behold, I will ſet my face againſt you for evil, and to cut off all Judah. 12. And I will take the remnant of Judah, that have ſet their faces to go into land of Egypt, to ſojourn there, and they ſhall all be conſumed, *and* fall in the land of Egypt: they ſhall *even* be conſumed by the ſword, *and* by the famine: they ſhall die, from the leaſt even to the greateſt, by the ſword, and by the famine: and they ſhall be an execration, *and* an aſtoniſhment, and a curſe, and a reproach. 13. For I will puniſh them that dwell in the land of Egypt, as I have puniſhed Jeruſalem, by the ſword, by the famine, and by the peſtilence: 14. So that none of the remnant of Judah, which are gone into the land of Egypt to ſojourn there, ſhall eſcape or remain, that they ſhould return into the land of Judah, to the which they have a deſire to return to dwell there: for none ſhall return but ſuch as ſhall eſcape.

The Jews in Egypt were now diſperſed into divers parts of the country, into *Migdol, and Noph*, and other places, and Jeremiah is ſent of an errand from God to them, which he delivered either when he had the moſt of them together, *in Pathros*, ver. 15. or, going about from place to place preaching to this purpoſe. He delivered his meſſage in the name of *the Lord of hoſts, the God of Iſrael*, and in it,

1. God puts them in mind of the deſolations of Judah and Jeruſalem, which, though the captives *by the rivers of Babylon* were daily mindful of *(Pſalm* cxxxvii. 1.) the fugitives in the cities of Egypt ſeem to have forgotten, and needed to be put in mind of, though they had not been ſo long out of ſight, as to become out of mind, *ver.* 2. *Ye have ſeen* what a deplorable condition Judah and Jeruſalem are brought into; now will you conſider whence thoſe deſolations came? from the wrath of God; it was his fury and his anger that kindled the fire, which made Jeruſalem and *the cities of Judah waſte and deſolate*, ver. 6. whoever were the inſtruments of the deſtruction, they were but inſtruments; it was a deſtruction from the Almighty.

2. He puts them in mind of the ſins that brought theſe deſolations upon Judah and Jeruſalem, it was for *their wickedneſs*, that was it that *provoked God to anger*, and eſpecially their idolatry, their *ſerving other gods*, ver. 3. and giving that honour to counterfeit deities, the creatures of their own fancy, and the work of their own hands, which ſhould have been given to the true God only; they forſook the God that was known among them, and his name great, for gods that *they knew not*, upſtart deities, whoſe original was obſcure, and not worth taking notice of: *Neither they, nor you, nor your fathers* could give any rational account, why *the God of Iſrael* was exchanged for ſuch impoſtors; *they knew not* that they were *gods*, nay, they could not but know that they were *no gods*.

3. He puts them in mind of the frequent fair warning he had given them by his word not to ſerve other gods, the contempt of which warnings was a great aggravation of their idolatry, *ver.* 4. *The prophets* were ſent with a great deal of care to call to them, ſaying, *O do not this abominable thing that I hate.* It becomes us to ſpeak of ſin with the utmoſt dread and deteſtation, as an *abominable thing*; it is certainly ſo, for it is that which God hates, and we are ſure that *his judgment is according to truth:* Call it odious, call it grievous, that we may by all means poſſible put our ſelves and others out of love with it. It becomes us to give warning of the danger of ſin, and the fatal conſequences of it, with all ſeriouſneſs and earneſtneſs: *O do not* do it! If you love God do not, for it is provoking to him; if you love your own ſouls do not, for it is deſtructive to them: Let conſcience do this for us in an hour of temptation, when we are ready to yield: O take heed! *do not this abominable thing* which the Lord hates; for if God hates it, thou ſhouldſt hate it. But did they regard what God ſaid to them? No! *they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear*, ver. 5. they ſtill perſiſted in their idolatries, and you ſee what came of it, therefore God's *anger was poured* out upon them, *as at this day.* Now this was intended for warning to you, who have not only heard the judgments of God's mouth, as they did, but have likewiſe ſeen the judgments of his hand, by which you ſhould be ſtartled and awakened, for they were inflicted *in terrorem*, that others might hear and fear, and do no more as they did, leſt they fare as they fared.

4. He reproves them for, and upbraids them with, their continued idolatries now they were come into Egypt, *ver.* 8. Ye *burn incenſe to other gods in the land of Egypt*; therefore God forbad them to go into Egypt, becauſe he knew it would be a ſnare to them. Thoſe whom God ſent into the land of the Chaldeans, though that was an idolatrous country, were there, by the power of God's grace, weaned from idolatry; but thoſe who went againſt God's mind into the land of the Egyptians, were there, by the power of their own corruptions, more wedded than ever to their idolatries; for when we thruſt our ſelves, without cauſe or call, into places of temptation, it is juſt with God to leave us to our ſelves. In doing this, 1. They did a great deal of injury to themſelves and their families. *You commit this great evil againſt your ſouls*, ver. 7. you wrong them, you deceive them with that which is falſe, you deſtroy them, for it will be fatal to them. Note, In ſinning againſt God we ſin *againſt our own ſouls*. It is the ready way to *cut your ſelves off* from all comfort and hope, *ver.* 8. to cut off your name and honour; ſo that you will, both by your ſin and by your miſery, become *a curſe, and a reproach among all nations:* It will become a proverb, As wretched as a Jew. It is the ready way *to cut off from you* all your relations, all that you ſhould have joy of, and have your families built up in, *man and woman, child and ſuckling*, ſo that Judah ſhall be a land loſt for want of heirs. 2. They filled up the meaſure of the iniquity of their fathers, and, as if that had been too little for them, added to it, *ver.* 9. *Have ye forgotten the wickedneſs* of thoſe that are gone before you, that you are not humbled for it, as you ought to be, and afraid of the conſequences of it? *Have you forgotten the puniſhments of your fathers?* ſo ſome read it. Do you not know

know how dear their idolatry coſt them, and yet dare you continue in that vain converſation received by tradition from your fathers, though you received the curſe with it? He minds them of the ſins and puniſhments *of the kings of Judah*, who, as great as they were, eſcaped not the judgments of God for their idolatry; yea, and they ſhould have taken warning by *the wickedneſs of their wives*, who had ſeduced them to idolatry. In the original it is, *And of his wives*, which Dr. Lightfoot thinks doth tacitly reflect upon Solomon's wives, particularly his Egyptian wives, to whom the idolatry *of the kings of Judah* owed its original. Have you forgotten this, and what came of it, that you dare venture upon the ſame wicked courſes? See *Neh.* xiii. 18, 26. Nay, to come to your own times, *Have you forgotten your own wickedneſs, and the wickedneſs of your wives*, when you lived in proſperity in Jeruſalem, and what ruin it brought upon you? But, alas! to what purpoſe do I ſpeak to them? Saith God to the prophet, *ver.* 10. *They are not humbled unto this day*, by all the humbling providences that they have been under. *They have not feared, nor walked in my law.* Note, Thoſe that walk not in the law of God, thereby ſhew that they are deſtitute of the fear of God.

5. He threatens their utter ruin for their perſiſting in their idolatry now they were in Egypt. Judgment is given againſt them, as before, *chap.* xlii. 22. that they ſhall periſh in Egypt; the decree is gone forth, and ſhall not be called back; they *ſet their faces to go into the land of Egypt*, ver. 12. were reſolute in their purpoſe againſt God, and now God is reſolute in his purpoſe againſt them; *I will ſet my face to cut off all Judah*, ver. 11. They that think not only to affront, but to confront God Almighty, will find themſelves outfaced; for *the face of the Lord is againſt them that do evil*, Pſalm xxxiv. 16. It is here threatned concerning theſe idolatrous Jews in Egypt, 1. That *they ſhall all be conſumed*, without exception, no degree or order among them ſhall eſcape, *they ſhall fall, from the leaſt to the greateſt*, ver. 12. *high and low, rich and poor.* 2. That *they ſhall be conſumed by* the very ſame judgments which God made uſe of for the puniſhment of Jeruſalem, *the ſword, famine, and peſtilence*, ver. 12, 13. They ſhall not be waſted by natural deaths, as Iſrael in the wilderneſs, but by theſe ſore judgments, which, by flying into Egypt, they thought to get out of the reach of. 3. That none (except a very few that ſhall narrowly eſcape) ſhall ever *return to the land of Judah* again, *ver.* 14. They thought, being nearer, they ſtood fairer for a return to their own land, than thoſe that were carried to Babylon; yet thoſe ſhall return, and theſe ſhall not; for the much ſurer way to any comfort, is that in which God has promiſed it to us, than that in which we have projected it for our ſelves. Obſerve, how thoſe that are fretful and diſcontented will be uneaſy, and fond of change, wherever they are: This people when they were in the land of Judah deſired to go into Egypt, *chap.* xlii. 22. but when they were in Egypt they deſired to *return to the land of Judah* again; they *lift up their ſoul* to it, ſo it is in the margin, which notes an earneſt deſire. But becauſe they would not dwell there when God commanded it, they ſhall not dwell there when they deſire it. If we walk contrary to God, he will walk contrary to us. How can thoſe expect to be well, that would not know when they were well, though God himſelf told them?

15. ¶ Then all the men which knew that their wives had burnt incenſe unto other gods, and all the women that ſtood by, a great multitude, even all the people that dwelt in the land of Egypt, in Pathros, anſwered Jeremiah, ſaying, 16. *As for* the word that thou haſt ſpoken unto us in the name of the LORD, we will not hearken unto thee. 17. But we will certainly do whatſoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth, to burn incenſe unto the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto her, as we have done, we and our fathers, our kings and our princes, in the cities of Judah, and in the ſtreets of Jeruſalem: for *then* had we plenty of victuals, and were well, and ſaw no evil. 18. But ſince we left off to burn incenſe to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto her, we have wanted all *things*, and have been conſumed by the ſword, and by the famine. 19. And when we burnt incenſe to the queen of heaven, and poured out drink-offerings unto her, did we make her cakes to worſhip her, and pour out drink-offerings unto her without our men?

We have here the peoples obſtinate refuſal to ſubmit to the power of the word of God in the mouth of Jeremiah. We have ſcarce ſuch an inſtance of downright daring contradiction to God himſelf as this here, or ſuch an avowed rebellion of the carnal mind. Obſerve,

1. The perſons that did thus ſet God and his judgments at defiance; it was not ſome one that was thus obſtinate, but the generality of the Jews; and they were ſuch as knew either themſelves or their wives to be guilty of the idolatry Jeremiah had reproved, *ver.* 15. where we find, 1. That the women had been more guilty of idolatry and ſuperſtition than the men, not becauſe the men ſtuck cloſer to the true God, and the true religion, than the women, but, I fear, becauſe they were generally atheiſts, and were for no God, and no religion at all, and therefore could eaſily allow their wives to be of a falſe religion, and to worſhip falſe gods. 2. That it was conſciouſneſs of guilt that made them impatient of reproof. *They knew that their wives had burnt incenſe to other gods*, and that they had countenanced them in it, *and the women that ſtood by* knew that they had joined with them in their idolatrous uſages, ſo that what Jeremiah ſaid touched them in a ſore place, which made them *kick againſt the pricks*, as *children of Belial*, that will not *bear the yoke.*

2. The reply which theſe perſons made to Jeremiah, and in him to God himſelf, and it is in effect the ſame with theirs, who had the impudence to ſay to the Almighty, *Depart from us, we deſire not the knowledge of thy ways.*

(1.) They declare their reſolution not to do as God commanded them, but what they themſelves had a mind to do, that is, they would go on to worſhip the moon, here called *the queen of heaven*; yet ſome underſtand it of the ſun, which was much worſhipped in Egypt, *chap.* xliii. 13. and had been ſo at Jeruſalem, 2 *Kings* xxiii. 11. and they ſay, that the Hebrew word for the ſun being feminine, it may not unfitly be called *the queen of heaven:* And others underſtand it of all *the hoſt of heaven*, or, *the frame of heaven*, the whole machine, *chap.* vii. 18. Theſe daring ſinners do not now go about to make excuſes for their refuſal to obey, nor ſuggeſt that Jeremiah ſpoke from himſelf, and not from God, as before, *chap.* xliii. 2. but they own he ſpake to them *in the name of the Lord*, and yet tell him flat and plain, in ſo many words, *we will not hearken unto thee*; we will do that which is forbidden, and run the venture of that which is threatned. Note, Thoſe that live in diſobedience to God commonly grow worſe and worſe, and the heart is more and more hardned by *the deceitfulneſs of ſin.* Here is the genuine language of the rebellious heart: *We will certainly do whatſoever thing goes forth out of our own mouth*, let God and his prophets ſay what they pleaſe to the contrary. What they ſaid, many think, that yet have not arrived to ſuch a degree of impudence as to ſpeak it out. It is that which the *young man* would be at *in the days of his youth*, he would *walk in the way of his heart, and the ſight of his eyes*, and would have and do every thing he has a mind to, *Eccl.* xi. 9.

(2.) They give ſome ſort of reaſons for their reſolution; for the moſt abſurd and unreaſonably wicked men will have ſomething to ſay for themſelves, till the day comes when *every mouth ſhall be ſtopped.*

1. They plead many of thoſe things which the advocates for Rome make the marks of a true church, and not only juſtify but magnify themſelves with, and theſe here have as much right to them as they have. 1. They plead antiquity; we are reſolved *to burn incenſe to the queen of heaven*, for *our fathers* did ſo; it is a practice that pleads preſcription; and why ſhould we pretend to be wiſer than our fathers? 2. They plead authority; they that had power practiſed it themſelves, and preſcribed it to others; *our kings and our princes* did it, whom God ſet over us, and who were of the ſeed of David. 3. They plead unity; it was not here and there one that did it, but *we*, we all with one conſent, we that are *a great multitude*, ver. 15. we did it. 4. They plead univerſality; it was not done here and there, but *in the cities of Judah.* 5. They plead viſibility; it was done not in a corner, in dark and ſhady groves only, but *in the ſtreets*, openly, and publickly. 6. They plead that it was the practice of the mother church, the holy ſee, it was not now learned firſt in Egypt, but it had been done in *Jeruſalem.* 7. They plead proſperity; *then had we plenty of* bread, *and* of all good things, we *were well, and ſaw no evil.* All the reſt I fear were too true in fact; God's witneſſes againſt their idolatry were few and hid; Elijah thought he was left alone: and this laſt might, perhaps, be true as to ſome particular perſons, but as to their nation, they were ſtill under rebukes for their rebellions, and there was *no peace to them that went out or came in*, 2 Chron. xv. 5. But ſuppoſing all to be true, yet this doth not at all excuſe them from idolatry; it is the law of God that we muſt be ruled and judged by, not the practice of men.

2. They ſuggeſt, that the judgments they had of late been under, were brought upon them for *leaving off to burn incenſe to the queen of heaven*, ver. 18. So perverſly did they miſconſtrue providence, though God, by his prophets, had ſo often explained it to them, and the thing it ſelf ſpoke the direct contrary! *Since we* forſook our idolatries, *we have wanted all things, and have been conſumed by the ſword*; the true reaſon of which was, becauſe they ſtill retained their idols in their heart, and an affection to their old ſins; but they would have it thought, it was becauſe they had forſaken the acts of ſin. Thus the afflictions which ſhould have been for their welfare, to part between them and their ſins, being miſinterpreted, did but confirm them in their ſins. Thus in the firſt ages of chriſtianity, when God chaſtiſed the nations by any publick calamities for oppoſing the chriſtians, and perſecuting them, they put a contrary ſenſe upon the calamities, as if they were ſent to puniſh them for conniving at the chriſtians, and tole-

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rating them, and cried, *Chriſtianos ad leones.* Yet, if it had been true, as they ſaid here, that ſince they returned to the ſervice of the true God, the God of Iſrael, they had been in want and trouble, was that a reaſon why they ſhould revolt from him again? That was as much as to ſay, they ſerved not him but their own bellies: Thoſe that know God, and put their truſt in him, will ſerve him though he ſtarve them, though he ſlay them, though they never ſee good day with him in this world, being well aſſured that they ſhall not loſe by him in the end.

3. They plead, that though the women were moſt forward and active in their idolatries, yet they did it with the conſent and approbation of their husbands; the women were buſy to *make cakes* for meat-offerings *to the queen of heaven*, and to prepare *and pour out the drink-offerings*, ver. 19. we found before it was their work, *chap.* vii. 18. but *did we* do it *without our husbands*, privately and unknown to them, ſo as to give them occaſion to be jealous of us? No; the fathers kindled the fire, while the women kneaded the dough; the men that were our heads, whom we were bound to learn of, and to be obedient to, taught us to do it by their example. Note, It is ſad when thoſe that are in the neareſt relation to each other, that ſhould quicken each other to that which is good, and ſo help one another to heaven, harden each other in ſin, and ſo ripen one another for hell. Some underſtand this as ſpoken by the husband, *ver.* 15. who plead they did not do it *without their men*, i. e. without their elders and rulers, their great men, and men in authority; but becauſe the making of the *cakes*, and the pouring out of *the drink-offerings*, is expreſly ſpoken of as the womens work, *chap.* vii. 18. it ſeems rather to be underſtood as their plea: But it was a frivolous plea. What would it avail them to be able to ſay, that it was according to their husbands mind, when they knew it was contrary to their God's mind?

20. ¶ Then Jeremiah ſaid unto all the people, to the men and to the women, and to all the people which had given him *that* anſwer, ſaying, 21. The incenſe that ye burnt in the cities of Judah, and in the ſtreets of Jeruſalem, ye and your fathers, your kings and your princes, and the people of the land, did not the LORD remember them, and came it *not* into his mind? 22. So that the LORD could no longer bear, becauſe of the evil of your doings, *and* becauſe of the abominations which ye have committed: therefore is your land a deſolation, and an aſtoniſhment, and a curſe without an inhabitant, as at this day. 23. Becauſe you have burnt incenſe, and becauſe ye have ſinned againſt the LORD, and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD, nor walked in his law, nor in his ſtatutes, nor in his teſtimonies: therefore this evil is happened unto you, as at this day. 24. Moreover, Jeremiah ſaid unto all the people, and to all the women, Hear the word of the LORD, all Judah that *are* in the land of Egypt. 25. Thus ſaith the LORD of hoſts the God of Iſrael, ſaying, Ye and your wives have both ſpoken with your mouths, and fulfilled with your hand, ſaying, We will ſurely perform our vows that we have vowed, to burn incenſe to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto her: ye will ſurely accompliſh your vows, and ſurely perform your vows. 26. Therefore hear ye the word of the LORD, all Judah that dwell in the land of Egypt, Behold, I have ſworn by my great name, ſaith the LORD, that my name ſhall no more be named in the mouth of any man of Judah, in all the land of Egypt, ſaying, The LORD God liveth. 27. Behold, I will watch over them for evil, and not for good, and all the men of Judah that *are* in the land of Egypt ſhall be conſumed by the ſword, and by the famine, until there be an end of them. 28. Yet a ſmall number that eſcape the ſword, ſhall return out of the land of Egypt into the land of Judah; and all the remnant of Judah that are gone into the land of Egypt to ſojourn there, ſhall know whoſe words ſhall ſtand, mine or theirs. 29. ¶ And this *ſhall be* a ſign unto you, ſaith the LORD, that I will puniſh you in this place, that ye may know that my words ſhall ſurely ſtand againſt you for evil. 30. Thus ſaith the LORD, Behold, I will give Pharaoh-hophra king of Egypt into the hand of his enemies, and into the hand of them that ſeek his life, as I gave Zedekiah king of Judah into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon his enemy, and that ſought his life.

Daring ſinners may ſpeak many a bold word, and many a big word, but, after all, God will have the laſt word; for he will be juſtified when he ſpeaks; and all fleſh, even the proudeſt, ſhall be ſilent before him. Prophets may be run down, but God cannot; nay, here the prophet would not.

1. Jeremiah hath ſomething to ſay to them from himſelf, which he could ſay without a ſpirit of prophecy, and that was to rectify their miſtake (a wilful miſtake it was) concerning the calamities they had been under, and the true intent and meaning of them. They ſaid, theſe miſeries came upon them, becauſe they had now *left off burning incenſe to the queen of heaven*; no, ſaith he, it was becauſe you had formerly done it, not becauſe you had now left it off. When they gave him that anſwer, he preſently replied upon them, *ver.* 20. that *the incenſe* which they and their fathers had burnt to other gods, did indeed go unpuniſhed a great while, for God was long-ſuffering towards them, and during the day of his patience it was, perhaps, as they ſaid, *well with them, and they ſaw no evil*; but, at length, they grew ſo provoking, *that the Lord could no longer bear*, ver. 22. but began a controverſy with them, whereupon ſome of them did a little reform, their ſins left them, for ſo it might be ſaid, rather than that they left their ſins: But their old guilt being ſtill upon the ſcore, and their corrupt inclinations ſtill the ſame, God remembred againſt them the idolatries of *their fathers, their kings, and their princes, in the ſtreets of Jeruſalem*, which they, inſtead of being aſhamed of, gloried in, as a juſtification of them in their idolatries, they *all came into his mind*, ver. 21. all the *abominations which they had committed*, ver. 22. and all their diſobedience to *the voice of the Lord*, ver. 23. all was brought to account, and *therefore*, to puniſh them for theſe, *is their land a deſolation, and a curſe, as at this day*, ver. 22. *therefore*, not for their late reformation, but for their old tranſgreſſions, is all *this evil happened to them, as at this day*, ver. 23. Note, The right underſtanding of the cauſe of our troubles, one would think, ſhould go far towards the cure of our ſins: Whatever *evil comes upon us*, it is *becauſe we have ſinned againſt the Lord*, and ſhould therefore *ſtand in awe, and not ſin.*

2. Jeremiah hath ſomething to ſay to them, *to the women* particularly, from *the Lord of hoſts, the God of Iſrael*; they have given their anſwer, now let them hear God's reply, *ver.* 24. *Judah, that* dwells *in the land of Egypt*, hath God ſpeaking to them, even there, that is their privilege; let them obſerve what he ſaith, that is their duty, *ver.* 26. Now God in his reply tells them plainly,

(1.) That ſince they were fully determined to perſiſt in their idolatry, God was fully determined to proceed in his controverſy with them; if they would go on to provoke him, he would go on to puniſh them, and ſee which would get the better at laſt. God repeats what they had ſaid, *ver.* 25. *You and your wives* are agreed in this obſtinacy, *you have ſpoken with your mouths, and fulfilled with your hands*, you have ſaid it, and you ſtand to it, have ſaid it, and go on to do accordingly, *We will ſurely perform our vows that we have vowed, to burn incenſe to the queen of heaven*, as if, though it were a ſin, yet their having vowed to do it, were ſufficient to juſtify them in the doing of it; whereas no man can by his vow make that lawful to himſelf, much leſs duty, which God has already made ſin. Well, ſaith God, *you will accompliſh, you will perform your* wicked *vows*: Now hear what is my vow, what *I have ſworn by my great name*, and if *the Lord hath ſworn*, he *will not repent*, ſince they have ſworn, and will not repent; *with the froward, he will ſhew himſelf froward*, Pſalm xviii. 26. He hath ſworn, 1. That what little remains of religion there were among them ſhould be loſt, *ver.* 26. Though they joined with the Egyptians in their idolatries, yet they continued upon many occaſions to make mention of the name of Jehovah, particularly in their ſolemn oaths, they ſaid, *Jehovah liveth*, he is *the living God*, ſo they owned him to be, though they worſhipped dead idols; they ſwear, *The Lord liveth*, Jer. v. 2. but I fear they retained this form of ſwearing more in honour of their nation, than of their God; but God ſaith, his *name ſhall no more be* thus *named* by *any man of Judah, in all the land of Egypt*, i. e. there ſhall be no Jews remaining to uſe this dialect of their country, or, if there be, they ſhall have forgotten it, and ſhall learn to ſwear, as the Egyptians do, *by the life of Pharaoh*, not of Jehovah. Note, Thoſe are very miſerable whom God hath ſo far left to themſelves, as that they have quite forgot their religion, and loſt all the remains of their good education. Or, this may intimate, that God would take it as an affront to him, and would reſent it accordingly, if they did make mention of his name, and profeſs any relation to him. 2. He hath ſworn, that what little remnant of people there was there, ſhould all be conſumed, *ver.* 27. *I will watch over them for evil*, no opportunity ſhall be let ſlip to bring ſome judgment upon them, *until there be an end of them*, and they be quite rooted out. Note, To thoſe whom God finds impenitent ſinners, he will be found an implacable Judge. And when it comes to this, they *ſhall know*, ver. 28. *whoſe word ſhall ſtand, mine or theirs.* They ſaid, they ſhould recover themſelves, when they returned to worſhip *the queen of heaven*; God ſaith, they ſhould ruin themſelves; and now the event will ſhew which was in the right. The conteſt between God and ſinners is, whoſe word ſhall ſtand, whoſe will ſhall be done, who ſhall get the better: Sinners ſay, they ſhall have peace though they go on; God ſaith, they ſhall have no peace: But *when God judgeth, he will overcome*; God's word ſhall ſtand, and not the ſinners.

(2.) He

(2.) He tells them, that a very few of them ſhould *eſcape the ſword*, and, in proceſs of time, *return into the land of Judah, a ſmall number*, ver. 28. next to none, in compariſon with the great numbers that ſhould return out of the land of the Chaldeans. This ſeems deſigned to upbraid thoſe who boaſted of their numbers that concurred in ſin, there were none to ſpeak of, that did not join in idolatry; well, ſaith God, and there ſhall be as few *that* ſhall *eſcape the ſword and famine*.

(3.) He gives them a ſign that all theſe threatnings ſhall be accompliſhed in their ſeaſon, that they ſhall be conſumed here in Egypt, and ſhall quite periſh; *Pharaoh-hophra*, the preſent *king of Egypt*, ſhall be delivered *into the hand of his enemies that ſeek his life; of his own rebellious ſubjects*, ſo ſome, under Amaſis, who uſurped his throne; *of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon*, ſo others, who invaded his kingdom; the former is related by Herodotus, the latter by Joſephus. It is likely this Pharaoh had tempted the Jews to idolatry by promiſes of his favour, however, they depended upon him for his protection, and it would be more than a preſage of their ruin, it would be a ſtep towards it, if he were gone. They expected more from him than from Zedekiah king of Judah, he was a more potent and politick prince; but, ſaith God, *I will give him into the hand of his enemies*, as I gave Zedekiah. Note, Thoſe creature comforts and confidences that we promiſe our ſelves moſt from, may fail us as ſoon as thoſe that we promiſe our ſelves leaſt from, for they are all what God makes them, not what we fancy them.

The ſacred hiſtory records not the accompliſhment of this prophecy, but its ſilence is ſufficient; we hear no more of theſe Jews in Egypt, and therefore conclude them, according to this prediction, loſt there; for no word of God ſhall fall to the ground.

CHAP. XLV.

The prophecy we have in this chapter concerns Baruch only, yet is intended for the ſupport and encouragement of all the Lord's people, that ſerve him faithfully, and keep cloſe to him in difficult, trying times. It is laid here after the ſtory of the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, and the diſperſion of the Jews, but was delivered long before, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, as was the prophecy in the next chapter, and, probably, thoſe that follow. We here find,
1. How Baruch was frightned, when he was brought into trouble for writing and reading Jeremiah's roll, ver. 1, — 3.
2. How his fears were checked with a reproof for his great expectations, and ſilenced with a promiſe of ſpecial preſervation, ver. 4, 5. *Though Baruch was only Jeremiah's ſcribe, yet this notice is taken of his frights, and this proviſion made for his comfort; for God deſpiſeth not any of his ſervants, but graciouſly concerns himſelf for the meaneſt and weakeſt, for Baruch the ſcribe, as well as for Jeremiah the prophet.*

1. THE word that Jeremiah the prophet ſpake unto Baruch the ſon of Neriah, when he had written theſe words in a book at the mouth of Jeremiah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the ſon of Joſiah king of Judah, ſaying, 2. Thus ſaith the LORD the God of Iſrael unto thee, O Baruch, 3. Thou didſt ſay, Wo is me now, for the LORD hath added grief to my ſorrow, I fainted in my ſighing, and I find no reſt. 4. ¶ Thus ſhalt thou ſay unto him, The LORD ſaith thus, Behold, *that* which I have built will I break down, and that which I have planted I will pluck up, even this whole land. 5. And ſeekeſt thou great things for thy ſelf? ſeek *them* not: for behold, I will bring evil upon all fleſh, ſaith the LORD: but thy life will I give unto thee for a prey in all places whither thou goeſt.

How Baruch was employed in writing Jeremiah's prophecies, and reading them, we had an account, *chap.* xxxvi. and how he was threatned for it by the king, warrants being out for him, and he forced to abſcond, and how narrowly he eſcaped under a divine protection, to which ſtory this chapter ſhould have been ſubjoined, but that it having reference to a private perſon, it is here thrown into the latter end of the book, as St. Paul's epiſtle to Philemon is put after his other epiſtles. Obſerve,

1. The conſternation that poor Baruch was in, when he was ſought for by the king's meſſengers, and obliged to hide his head, and the notice which God took of it. He cried out, *Wo is me now*, ver. 3. He was a young man ſetting out in the world, he was well affected to the things of God, and was willing to ſerve God and his prophet, but when it came to ſuffering, he was deſirous to be excuſed; being an ingenious man, and a ſcholar, he ſtood fair for preferment, and now to be driven into a corner, and in danger of a priſon, or worſe, was a great balk to him. When he read the roll publickly, he hoped to gain reputation by it, that it would have made him to be taken notice of, and employed, but when he found that inſtead of that it expoſed him to contempt, and brought him into diſgrace, he cried out, I am undone, I ſhall fall into the purſuivants hands, and be impriſoned, and put to death, or baniſhed; *the Lord has added grief to my ſorrow*, i. e. has loaded me with one trouble after another; after the grief of writing and reading the prophecies of my country's ruin, I have the ſorrow of being treated as a criminal for ſo doing; and though another might make nothing of this, yet for my part I cannot bear it, it is a burthen too heavy for me; *I fainted in my ſighing*, or, *I am faint with my ſighing*, it juſt kills me, *and I find no reſt*, no ſatisfaction in my own mind, I cannot compoſe my ſelf as I ſhould and would to bear it, nor have I any proſpect of relief or comfort. Baruch was a good man, but we muſt ſay, this was his infirmity. Note, 1. Young beginners in religion, like freſh-water ſoldiers, are apt to be diſcouraged with the little difficulties which they commonly meet with at firſt in the ſervice of God: They do but *run with the footmen*, and it *wearieth them*; they *faint* upon the very dawning of *the day of adverſity*, and it is an evidence that *their ſtrength is ſmall*, Prov. xxiv. 10. that their faith is weak, and they are yet but babes, that cry for every hurt, and every fright. 2. Some of the beſt and deareſt of God's ſaints and ſervants, when they have ſeen ſtorms riſing have been in frights, and apt to make the worſt of things, and to diſquiet themſelves with melancholy apprehenſions more than there is cauſe for. 3. God takes notice of the frets and diſcontents of his people, and is diſpleaſed with them. Baruch ſhould have rejoiced that he was counted worthy to ſuffer in ſuch a good cauſe, and with ſuch good company, but, inſtead of that, he vexeth at it, and blames his lot; nay, and reflects upon his God, as if he had dealt hardly with him; what he ſaid was ſpoken in a heat, and paſſion, but God was offended at it, as Moſes himſelf did, and paid dear for it too, when, his ſpirit being provoked, he *ſpake unadviſedly with his lips. Thou didſt ſay* ſo and ſo, and it was not well ſaid; God keeps account what we ſay, even when we ſpeak in haſte.

2. The reproof that God gave him for talking at this rate. Jeremiah was troubled to ſee him in ſuch a toſs, and knew not well what to ſay to him; he was loth to chide him, and yet thought he deſerved it; was willing to comfort him, and yet knew not which way to go about it; but God tells him what he *ſhall ſay to him*, ver. 4. Jeremiah could not be certain what was at the bottom of theſe complaints and fears, but God ſees it; they came from his corruptions; that therefore the hurt might not be healed ſlightly, he ſearcheth the wound, and ſhews him that he had raiſed his expectations too high in this world, and had promiſed himſelf too much from it, and that made this diſtreſs and trouble he was in ſo very grievous to him, and ſo hard to be born. Note, The frowns of the world would not diſquiet us as they do, if we did not fooliſhly flatter our ſelves with the hopes of its ſmiles, and court and covet them too much. It is our over-fondneſs for the good things of this preſent time, that makes us impatient under its evil things. Now God ſhews him that it was his fault and folly at this time of day eſpecially, either to deſire, or to look for an abundance of the wealth and honour of this world: For, 1. The ſhip was ſinking; ruin was coming upon the Jewiſh nation, an utter and univerſal ruin; *that which I have built*, to be a houſe for my ſelf, *I am breaking down, and that which I have planted*, to be a vineyard for my ſelf, *I am plucking up, even this whole land*, the Jewiſh church and ſtate, and doſt thou now *ſeek great things for thy ſelf?* Doſt thou expect to be rich and honourable, and to make a figure now? No, 2. It is abſurd for thee to be now painting thine own cabin. Canſt thou expect to be high, when all are brought low? To be full, when all about thee are empty? To ſeek our ſelves more than the publick welfare, eſpecially to ſeek great things to our ſelves, when the publick is in danger, is very unbecoming Iſraelites. We may apply it to this world, and our ſtate in it; God in his providence is breaking down and pulling up, every thing is uncertain and periſhing, we cannot expect any continuing city here: What folly is it then to *ſeek great things for our ſelves* here, where every thing is little, and nothing certain!

3. The encouragement that God gave him to hope, that though he ſhould not be great, yet he ſhould be ſafe; *I will bring evil upon all fleſh*, all nations of men, all orders and degrees of men, *but thy life will I give to thee for a prey (thy ſoul*, ſo the word is) *in all places whither thou goeſt*. Thou muſt expect to be hurried from place to place, and wherever thou goeſt to be in danger, but thou ſhalt eſcape, though often very narrowly, ſhalt have thy life, but it ſhall be as a prey, which is got with much difficulty and danger; thou ſhalt be ſaved as by fire. Note, The preſervation and continuance of life is a very great mercy, and we are bound to account it ſo, as it is the prolonging of our opportunity to glorify God in this world, and to get ready for a better; and at ſometimes eſpecially, when the arrows of death fly thick about us, it is a ſignal favour, and what we ought to be very thankful for, and while we have it, muſt not complain, though we be diſappointed of the great things we expected. *Is not the life more than meat?*

CHAP. XLVI.

How judgment began at the houſe of God, we have found in the foregoing prophecy and hiſtory, but now we ſhall find that it did not end

end there; in this and the following chapters we have predictions of the desolations of the neighbour nations, and those brought upon them too mostly by the king of Babylon, till at length Babylon it self comes to be reckoned with. The prophecy against Egypt is here put first, and takes up this whole chapter; in which we have, 1. *A prophecy of the defeat of Pharaoh-necho's army by the Chaldean forces at Carchemish, which was accomplished presently in the fourth year of Jehoiakim,* ver. 1,—12. 2. *A prophecy of the descent which Nebuchadnezzar should make upon the land of Egypt, and his success in it, which was accomplished some years after the destruction of Jerusalem,* ver. 13,—26. 3. *A word of comfort to the Israel of God, in the midst of those calamities,* ver. 27, 28.

1. THE word of the LORD which came to Jeremiah the prophet, against the Gentiles. 2. Against Egypt, against the army of Pharaoh-necho king of Egypt, which was by the river Euphrates in Charchemish, which Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon smote in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah. 3. Order ye the buckler and shield, and draw near to battle. 4. Harness the horses, and get up, ye horsemen, and stand forth with *your* helmets, furbish the spears, *and* put on the brigandines. 5. Wherefore have I seen them dismayed, *and* turned away back? and their mighty ones are beaten down, and are fled apace, and look not back: *for* fear *was* round about, saith the LORD. 6. Let not the swift flee away, nor the mighty man escape: they shall stumble, and fall toward the north by the river Euphrates. 7. Who *is* this *that* cometh up as a flood, whose waters are moved as the rivers? 8. Egypt riseth up like a flood, and *his* waters are moved like the rivers, and he saith, I will go up, *and* will cover the earth, I will destroy the city, and the inhabitants thereof. 9. Come up, ye horses, and rage, ye chariots, and let the mighty men come forth, the Ethiopians, and the Libyans that handle the shield, and the Lydians that handle *and* bend the bow. 10. For this *is* the day of the LORD God of hosts, a day of vengeance, that he may avenge him of his adversaries: and the sword shall devour, and it shall be satiate, and made drunk with their blood: for the LORD God of hosts hath a sacrifice in the north-country by the river Euphrates. 11. Go up into Gilead, and take balm, O virgin, the daughter of Egypt: in vain shalt thou use many medicines: *for* thou shalt not be cured. 12. The nations have heard of thy shame, and thy cry hath filled the land: for the mighty man hath stumbled against the mighty, *and* they are fallen both together.

The first verse is the title of that part of this book which relates to the neighbour-nations, and follows here. It is *the word of the Lord which came to Jeremiah against the Gentiles*; for God is King and Judge of nations, knows them, and will call them to an account that know him not, nor take any notice of him. Both Isaiah and Ezekiel prophesied against these nations, that Jeremiah here has a several saying to, and with reference to the same events. In the Old Testament we have *the word of the Lord against the Gentiles*, in the New Testament we have *the word of the Lord for the Gentiles*, that they who were *afar off are made nigh*.

He begins with Egypt, because they were of old Israel's oppressors, and of late their deceivers, when they put confidence in them. In these verses he foretels the overthrow of *the army of Pharaoh-necho*, by Nebuchadrezzar, *in the fourth year of Jehoiakim*, which was so compleat a victory to the king of Babylon, that thereby he recovered from the river of Egypt, to *the river Euphrates*, *all that pertained to the king of Egypt*, and so weakned him, that he *came not again any more out of his land*, as we find, 2 *Kings* xxiv. 7. and so made him pay dear for his expedition against the king of Assyria four years before, in which he slew Josiah, 2 *Kings* xxiii. 29. This is the event that is here foretold in lofty expressions of triumph over Egypt, thus foiled; which Jeremiah would speak of with a particular pleasure, because the death of Josiah, which he had lamented, was now avenged on Pharaoh-necho. Now here,

1. The Egyptians are upbraided with the mighty preparations they made for this expedition, in which the prophet calls to them to do their utmost, for so they would: Come then, *order the buckler*, let the weapons of war be got ready, *ver.* 3. Egypt was famous for *horses*, let them be *harnessed*, and the cavalry well mounted; *get up ye horsemen, and stand forth*, &c. *ver.* 4. See what preparations the children of men make, with abundance of care and trouble, and at a vast expence, to kill one another, as if they did not die fast enough of themselves! He compares their marching out upon this expedition, to the rising of their river Nile, *ver.* 7, 8. *Egypt* now *riseth up like a flood*, scorning to keep within its own banks, and threatning to overflow all the neighbouring lands; it is a very formidable army that the Egyptians bring into the field upon this occasion, the prophet summons them, *ver.* 9. *Come up, ye horses, rage, ye chariots*; he challengeth them to bring all their confederate troops together, *the Ethiopians*, that descended from the same stock with the Egyptians, *Gen.* x. 6. and were their neighbours and allies; *the Libyans and Lydians*, both seated in Africa, to the west of Egypt, and from them the Egyptians fetched their auxiliary forces: Let them strengthen themselves with all the art and interest they have, yet it shall be all in vain, they shall be shamefully defeated notwithstanding, for God will fight against them, and against him *there is no wisdom nor counsel*, Prov. xxi. 30, 31. It concerns them that go forth to war, not only to *order the buckler*, and *harness the horses*, but to repent of their sins, and pray to God for his presence with them, and that they may have it to keep themselves from every wicked thing.

2. They are upbraided with the great expectations they had from this expedition, which were quite contrary to what God intended in bringing them together. They knew their own thoughts, and God knew them, and sat in heaven, and laughed at them, *but they knew not the thoughts of the Lord, for he gathers them as sheaves into the floor*, Mic. iv. 11, 12. Egypt saith, *ver.* 8. *I will go up, I will cover the earth*, and none shall hinder me; *I will destroy the city*, whatever city it is that stands in my way; like Pharaoh of old, *I will pursue, I will overtake*. Egypt saith, they shall have a day of it, but God saith, it shall be his day; *this is the day of the Lord God of hosts*, ver. 10. the day in which he will be exalted in the overthrow of the Egyptians. They meant one thing, but God meant another; they designed it for the advancement of their dignity, and the enlargement of their dominion, but God designed it for the great abasement and weakning of their kingdom. It is *a day of vengeance*, for Josiah's death; it is a day of *sacrifice* to divine justice, to which multitudes of the sinners of Egypt shall fall as victims. Note, When men think to magnify themselves by pushing on unrighteous enterprizes, let them expect that God will glorify himself by blasting them, and cutting them off.

3. They are upbraided with their cowardise and inglorious flight when they come to an engagement, *ver.* 5, 6. *Wherefore have I seen them*, notwithstanding all these mighty and vast preparations, and all these expressions of bravery and resolution, when the Chaldean army faceth them, *dismayed*, *turned back*, quite disheartned, and no spirit left them. 1. They make a shameful retreat, even *their mighty ones*, that one would think should have stood their ground, flee a flight, flee by consent, make the best of their way, flee in confusion, and with the utmost precipitation; they have neither time nor heart to *look back*, but *fear is round about* them, for they apprehend it so: And yet, 2. They cannot make their escape; they have the shame of flying, and yet not the satisfaction of saving themselves by flight; they might as well have stood their ground, and died upon the spot; for even *the swift shall not flee away:* The lightness of their heels shall fail them when it comes to the trial, as well as the stoutness of their hearts; the *mighty* shall not *escape*, nay, they *are beaten down*, and broken to pieces: *They shall stumble* in their flight, *and fall towards the north*, towards their enemy's country; for such confusion were they in when they took to their feet, that, instead of making homewards, as men usually do in that case, they made forwards. Note, *The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong*. Valiant men are not always victorious.

4. They are upbraided with their utter inability ever to recover this blow, which should be fatal to their nation, *ver.* 11, 12. The damsel, *the daughter of Egypt*, that lived in great pomp and state, is sorely wounded by this defeat. Let her now seek for *balm in Gilead*, and physicians there; let her use all the *medicines* her wise men can prescribe, for the healing of this hurt, and the repairing of the loss sustained by this defeat; but all *in vain*, *no cure shall be* to them; they shall never be able to bring such a powerful army as this into the field again. *The nations* that rang of thy glory and strength, *have* now *heard of thy shame*, how shamefully thou wast routed, and how thou art weakned by it: It needs not be spread by the triumphs of the conquerors, the shrieks and outcries of the conquered will proclaim it; *thy cry hath filled the* country about: For when they fled several ways, one *mighty man stumbled* upon another, and dashed against another, such confusion were they in! so that *both together* become a prey to the pursuers, an easy prey. A thousand such dreadful accidents there should be, which should fill the country with the cry of them that were overcome. *Let not the mighty man* therefore *glory in his might*, for the time may come when it will stand him in no stead.

13. ¶ The word that the LORD spake to Jeremiah the prophet, how Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon should come *and* smite the land of Egypt. 14. Declare ye in Egypt, and publish in Migdol, and publish in Noph, and in Tahpanhes: say ye, Stand fast, and prepare thee; for the sword shall devour round about thee. 15. Why are thy valiant *men* swept away? they stood not, because the LORD did drive them. 16. He made many to fall, yea, one fell upon another, and they said, Arise, and let us go again to our own people, and to the

tlie land of our nativity, from the oppreſſing ſword. 17. They did cry there, Pharaoh king of Egypt *is but* a noiſe, he hath paſſed the time appointed. 18. *As* I live, ſaith the King, whoſe name *is* the LORD of hoſts, Surely as Tabor *is* among the mountains, and as Carmel by the ſea, *ſo* ſhall he come. 19. Oh thou daughter dwelling in Egypt, furniſh thy ſelf to go into captivity: for Noph ſhall be waſte and deſolate without an inhabitant. 20. Egypt *is like* a very fair heifer, *but* deſtruction cometh: it cometh out of the north. 21. Alſo her hired men *are* in the midſt of her, like fatted bullocks, for they alſo are turned back, *and* are fled away together; they did not ſtand, becauſe the day of their calamity was come upon them, *and* the time of their viſitation. 22. The voice thereof ſhall go like a ſerpent, for they ſhall march with an army, and come againſt her with axes, as hewers of wood. 23. They ſhall cut down her foreſt, ſaith the LORD, though it cannot be ſearched, becauſe they are more than the graſhoppers, and *are* innumerable. 24. The daughter of Egypt ſhall be confounded, ſhe ſhall be delivered into the hand of the people of the north. 25. The LORD of hoſts, the God of Iſrael ſaith, Behold, I will puniſh the multitude of No, and Pharaoh, and Egypt, with their gods, and their kings, even Pharaoh, and *all* them that truſt in him. 26. And I will deliver them into the hand of thoſe that ſeek their lives, and into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of his ſervants: and afterwards it ſhall be inhabited, as in the days of old, ſaith the LORD. 27. ¶ But fear not thou, O my ſervant Jacob, and be not diſmayed, O Iſrael; for behold, I will ſave thee from afar off, and thy ſeed from the land of their captivity, and Jacob ſhall return, and be in reſt and at eaſe, and none ſhall make *him* afraid. 28. Fear thou not, O Jacob my ſervant, ſaith the LORD, for I *am* with thee, for I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have driven thee, but I will not make a full end of thee, but correct thee in meaſure, yet will I not leave thee wholly unpuniſhed.

In theſe verſes we have,

1. Confuſion and terror ſpoken to Egypt. The accompliſhment of the prediction in the former part of the chapter, diſabled the Egyptians to make any attempts upon other nations; for what could they do when their army was routed? but ſtill they remained ſtrong at home, and none of their neighbours durſt make any attempts upon them: Though the kings of Egypt came no more *out of their land*, 2 Kings xxiv. 7. yet they kept ſafe and eaſy in their land; and what would they deſire more, than peaceably to enjoy their own? which one would think all men ſhould be content to do, and not covet to invade their neighbours. But the meaſure of Egypt's iniquity is full, and now they ſhall not long enjoy their own; they that encroached on others, ſhall now be themſelves encroached on. The ſcope of the prophecy here is to ſhew, *how the king of Babylon ſhould* ſhortly *come and ſmite the land of Egypt*, and bring the war into their own boſoms, which they had formerly carried into his borders, *ver.* 13. This was fulfilled by the ſame hand with the former, even Nebuchadrezzar's, but many years after, twenty at leaſt, and, probably, the prediction of it was long after the former prediction, and, perhaps, much about the ſame time with that other prediction of the ſame event which we had, *chap.* xliii. 10.

(1.) Here is the alarm of war ſounded in Egypt, to their great amazement, *ver.* 14. notice given to the country that the enemy is approaching, *the ſword is devouring round about* in the neighbouring countries, and therefore it is time for the Egyptians to put themſelves in a poſture of defence, to prepare for war, that they may give the enemy a warm reception. This muſt be proclaimed in all parts of Egypt, particularly in Migdol, Noph, and Tahpanhes, becauſe in theſe places eſpecially the Jewiſh refugees or fugitives rather had planted themſelves, in contempt of God's command, *chap.* xliv. 1. and let them hear what a ſorry ſhelter Egypt is likely to be to them.

(2.) The retreat of the forces of other nations, which the Egyptians had in their pay hereupon, is here foretold. Some conſiderable number of thoſe troops, it is probable, were poſted upon the frontiers, to guard them, where they were beaten off by the invaders, and put to flight: Then were the *valiant men ſwept away*, ver. 15. as with *a ſweeping rain*; it is the word that is uſed, *Prov.* xxviii. 3. they can none of them ſtand their ground, *becauſe the Lord driveth them* from their reſpective poſts; he drives them by his terrors, he drives them by enabling the Chaldeans to drive them. It is not poſſible thoſe ſhould fix whom the wrath of God chaſeth. He it was, *ver.* 16. that *made many to fall, yea*, when their day is come to fall, the enemy needs not throw them down, they ſhall *fall one upon another*, every man ſhall be a ſtumbling-block to his fellow, to his follower; nay, if God pleaſeth, they ſhall be made to *fall upon one another, every man's ſword* ſhall be *againſt his fellow. Her hired men*, the troops Egypt has in her ſervice, are indeed *in the midſt of her like fatted bullocks*, luſty men, able bodied, and great ſpirited, that were likely for action, and to have made their part good againſt the enemy, but *they are turned back*, their hearts failed them, and, inſtead of fighting, they are *fled away together:* How could they withſtand their fate, when *the day of their calamity was come*, the day in which God will viſit them in wrath? Some think they are compared to *fatted bullocks* for their luxury; they had wantoned in pleaſures ſo that they were very unfit for hardſhips, and therefore *turned back*, and could *not ſtand*. In this conſternation, 1. They all made homewards, towards their own country, *ver.* 16. *They ſaid, Ariſe, and let us go again to our own people*, where we may be ſafe *from the oppreſſing ſword* of the Chaldeans, that bears down all before it. In times of exigence little confidence is to be put in mercenary troops, that fight purely for pay, and have no intereſts in theirs whom they fight for. 2. They exclaimed mightily againſt Pharaoh, to whoſe cowardiſe, or ill conduct, it is probable, their defeat was owing. When he poſted them there upon the borders of his country, it is likely, he told them, he would, within ſuch a time, come himſelf with a gallant army of his own ſubjects to ſupport them, but he failed them; and when the enemy advanced, they found they had none to back them, ſo that they were perfectly abandoned to the fury of the invaders; no marvel then that they quitted their poſt, and deſerted the ſervice, crying out, *Pharaoh king of Egypt is but a noiſe*, ver. 17. he can hector and bounce, and talk big, what mighty things he would do, but that is all, he brings nothing to paſs; all his promiſes to thoſe in alliance with him, or that are employed for him, vaniſh into ſmoke; he brings not the ſuccours he engaged to bring, or not till it is too late; *he hath paſſed the time appointed*, did not keep his word, nor keep his day, and therefore they bid him farewel, they will never ſerve under him any more. Note, Many times thoſe that make moſt noiſe in any buſineſs, are *but a noiſe*. Great talkers are little doers.

(3.) The formidable power of the Chaldean army is here deſcribed bearing down all before it. *The King* of kings, *whoſe name is the Lord of hoſts*, and before whom the mightieſt kings on earth, though gods to us, are but as graſhoppers, he hath ſaid it, he hath ſworn it, *As I live, ſaith* this *King, as Tabor* overtops *the mountains, and Carmel* overlooks *the ſea, ſo ſhall* the king of Babylon overpower all the force of Egypt; ſuch a command ſhall he have, ſuch a ſway ſhall he bear! *ver.* 18. He and his *army ſhall come againſt* Egypt *with axes, as hewers of wood*, ver. 22. and the Egyptians ſhall be no more able to reſiſt them, than the tree is to reſiſt the man that comes with an ax to *cut it down:* So that Egypt ſhall be felled as a *foreſt* is *by the hewers of wood*, which, if they be many of them, and thoſe well provided with inſtruments for the purpoſe, will be done in a little time. Egypt is very populous, full of towns and cities, like a *foreſt*, the trees of which *cannot be ſearched*, or numbred, and very rich, full of hid treaſures, many of which will eſcape the ſearching eye of the Chaldean ſoldiers; but they ſhall make a great ſpoil in the country, for *they are more than the locuſts*, that come in vaſt ſwarms, and overrun a country, devouring every green thing, *Joel* i. 6, 7. ſo ſhall the Chaldeans do, for *they are innumerable*. Note, *The Lord of hoſts* hath numberleſs hoſts at his command.

(4.) The deſolation of Egypt hereby is foretold, and the waſte that ſhould be made of that rich country. *Egypt is* now *like a very fair heifer*, or calf, *ver.* 20. fat and ſhining, and not *accuſtomed to the yoke* of ſubjection; wanton as a heifer that is well fed, and very ſportful: Some think here is an alluſion to Apis, the bull or calf which the Egyptians worſhipped, from whom the children of Iſrael learned to *worſhip the golden calf*. Egypt is as fair as a goddeſs, and adores her ſelf, *but deſtruction cometh; cutting up comes*, ſo ſome read it; *it comes out of the north*; thence the Chaldean ſoldiers ſhall come, as ſo many butchers, or ſacrificers, to kill and cut up this *fair heifer*. 1. The Egyptians ſhall be brought down, ſhall be tamed, and their tune changed: *The daughter of Egypt ſhall be confounded*, ver. 24. ſhall be filled with aſtoniſhment; *their voice ſhall go like a ſerpent*, i. e. it ſhall be very low and ſubmiſſive, they ſhall not low like a *fair heifer*, that makes a great noiſe, but hiſs out of their holes *like ſerpents:* They ſhall not dare to make loud complaints of the cruelty of the conquerors, but vent their griefs in ſilent murmurs: They ſhall not now, as they uſed to do, anſwer roughly, but, with *the poor, uſe intreaties*, and beg for their lives. 2. They ſhall be carried away priſoners into their enemy's land, *ver.* 19. *O thou daughter dwelling* ſecurely and delicately *in Egypt*, that fruitful, pleaſant country, do not think this world will laſt always, but *furniſh thy ſelf to go into captivity*; inſtead of rich clothes, which will but tempt the enemy to ſtrip thee, get plain and warm clothes; inſtead of fine ſhoes, provide ſtrong ones; and inure thy ſelf to hardſhip, that thou mayſt bear it the better. Note, It concerns us, among all our preparations, to prepare for trouble; we provide for the entertainment of our friends, let us not neglect to provide for the entertainment of our enemies, nor among all our furniture omit furniture for captivity. The Egyptians muſt prepare to flee, for their cities ſhall be evacuated;

ated; Noph particularly *ſhall be deſolate without an inhabitant*, ſo general ſhall the ſlaughter and the captivity be. There are ſome penalties which we ſay the king and the multitude are exempted from, but here even theſe are obnoxious: *The multitude of No ſhall be puniſhed:* it is called *populous No*, Nah. iii. 8. *Though hand join in hand*, yet they ſhall not eſcape: nor can any think to go off in the crowd. Be they never ſo many, they ſhall find God will be too many for them. Their kings and all their petty princes ſhall fall; and their gods too, *chap.* xliii. 12, 13. their idols and their great men. Thoſe which they call their tutelar deities ſhall be no protection to them. Pharaoh ſhall be brought down, and *all thoſe that truſt in him*, ver. 25. particularly the Jews that came to ſojourn in his country, truſting in him rather than in God. All theſe ſhall be *delivered into the hands of the northern nations*, ver. 24. into the hand not only of Nebuchadnezzar that mighty potentate, but *into the hands of his ſervants*, according to the curſe on Ham's poſterity, of which the Egyptians were, that they ſhould be the *ſervants of ſervants*, theſe ſeek their lives, and into their hands they ſhall be delivered.

(5.) An intimation is given that, in proceſs of time, Egypt ſhall recover itſelf again, *ver.* 26. *afterwards it ſhall be inhabited*, ſhall be peopled again, whereas by this deſtruction it was almoſt diſpeopled. Ezekiel foretels that this ſhould be at the end of forty years, *Ezek.* xxix. 13. See what change the nations of the earrh are ſubject to; how they are emptied and increaſed again, and let not nations that proſper be ſecure, nor thoſe that for the preſent are under hatches deſpair.

2. Here is comfort and peace ſpoke to the Iſrael of God, *ver.* 27, 28. Some underſtand it of thoſe whom the king of Egypt had carried into captivity with Jehoahaz, but we read not of any that were carried away captives with him; it may therefore rather refer to the captives of Babylon, whom God had mercy in ſtore for, or, more generally, to all the people of God, deſigned for their encouragement in the moſt difficult times, when the judgments of God are abroad among the nations. We had theſe words of comfort before, *chap.* xxx. 10, 11. (1.) Let the wicked of the earth tremble, they have cauſe for it; *but fear not thou, O my ſervant Jacob, and be not diſmayed, O Iſrael*; and again, *Fear thou not, O Jacob.* God would not have his people to be a timorous people. (2.) The wicked of the earth *ſhall be put away like droſs*, not to be looked after any more; but God's people, in order to their being ſaved, ſhall be found out and gathered, though they be far off, ſhall be redeemed, though they be held faſt in captivity, and ſhall return. (3.) The wicked *is like the troubled ſea when it cannot reſt, flee when none purſues*; but Jacob, being at home in God, *ſhall be at reſt, and at eaſe, and none ſhall make him afraid*; for *what time he is afraid*, he has a *God to truſt to.* (4.) The wicked God *beholds afar off:* but wherever thou art, *O Jacob, I am with thee, a very preſent help.* (5.) A *full end ſhall be made* of the nations that oppreſt God's Iſrael, as Egypt and Babylon: but mercy ſhall be kept in ſtore for the Iſrael of God; they ſhall be corrected, but not caſt off, the correction ſhall be in meaſure, in reſpect of degree and continuance. Nations have their periods, the Jewiſh nation itſelf is come to an end, as a nation; but the Goſpel church, God's ſpiritual Iſrael, ſtill continues, and will to the end of time; in that this promiſe is to have its full accompliſhment, that though God correct it, he will never *make a full end of it.*

CHAP. XLVII.

This chapter reads the Philiſtines their doom, as the former read the Egyptians theirs; and by the ſame hand, that of Nebuchadrezzar It is ſhort, but terrible; and Tyre and Zidon, though they lay at ſome diſtance from them, come in ſharers with them in the deſtruction here threatned. 1. *It is foretold, that the forces of the northern crowns ſhould come upon them, to their great terror*, ver. 1,—5. 2. *That the war ſhould continue long, and their endeavours to put an end to it ſhould be in vain*, ver. 6, 7.

1. THE word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah the prophet againſt the Philiſtines, before that Pharaoh ſmote Gaza. 2. Thus ſaith the LORD, Behold, waters riſe up out of the north, and ſhall be an overflowing flood, and ſhall overflow the land, and all that is therein, the city, and them that dwell therein: then the men ſhall cry, and all the inhabitants of the land ſhall howl. 3. At the noiſe of the ſtamping of the hoofs of his ſtrong *horſes*, at the ruſhing of his chariots, *and at* the rumbling of his wheels, the fathers ſhall not look back to *their* children for feebleneſs of hands: 4. Becauſe of the day that cometh to ſpoil all the Philiſtines, *and* to cut off from Tyrus and Zidon every helper that remaineth: for the LORD will ſpoil the Philiſtines, the remnant of the country of Caphtor. 5. Baldneſs is come upon Gaza, Aſhkelon is cut off *with* the remnant of their valley: how long wilt thou cut thy ſelf? 6. O thou ſword of the LORD, how long *will it be* ere thou be quiet? put up thy ſelf into thy ſcabbard, reſt and be ſtill. 7. How can it be quiet, ſeeing the LORD hath given it a charge againſt Aſhkelon, and againſt the ſea-ſhore? there hath he appointed it.

As the Egyptians had often proved falſe friends, ſo the Philiſtines had always been ſworn enemies to the Iſrael of God, and the more dangerous and vexatious for their being ſuch near neighbours to them. They were pretty well humbled in David's time, but it ſeems they had got head again, and were a conſiderable people till Nebuchadnezzar cut them off with other their neighbours, which is the event here foretold. The date of this prophecy is obſervable; it was *before Pharaoh* ſmote Gaza: when this blow was given to Gaza by the king of Egypt, is not certain, whether in his expedition againſt Carchemiſh, or in his return from thence, after he had ſlain Joſiah, or when he afterwards came with deſign to relieve Jeruſalem; but this is mentioned here to ſhew, that this word of the Lord came to Jeremiah againſt the Philiſtines, when they were in their full ſtrength and luſtre, themſelves and their cities in good condition, in no peril from any adverſary, or evil occurrent, when no diſturbance of their repoſe was foreſeen by any human probabilities, yet then Jeremiah foretold their ruin, which *Pharaoh*'s ſmiting Gaza ſoon after would be but an earneſt of, and, as it were, the beginnings of ſorrow to that country. It is here foretold,

1. That a foreign enemy, and a very formidable one, ſhall be brought upon them; *Waters riſe up out of the north*, ver. 2. Waters ſometimes ſignifies multitudes of people and nations, *Rev.* xvii. 15. ſometimes great and threatning calamities, *Pſal.* lxix. 1. theſe here ſignify both: they *riſe out of the north*, whence fair weather uſeth to come, and the wind that drives away rain, but now a terrible ſtorm comes out of that cold climate. The Chaldean army ſhall overflow the land like a deluge. Probably this happened before the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, for it ſhould ſeem that in Gedaliah's time, which was juſt after, the army of the Chaldeans was quite withdrawn out of thoſe parts. The country of the Philiſtines was but of ſmall extent, ſo that it would ſoon be overwhelmed by ſo vaſt an army.

2. That they ſhall all be in a mighty fright and conſternation upon it: the men ſhall have no heart to fight, but ſhall ſit down and cry like children, *all the inhabitants of the land ſhall howl*, ſo that nothing but lamentation ſhall be heard in all places. The occaſion of the fright is elegantly deſcribed, *ver.* 3. before it comes to killing and ſlaying, the very *ſtamping of the horſes*, and *rattling of the chariots*, when the enemy makes his approach, ſhall ſtrike a terror upon the people, to that degree, that parents in their frights ſhall ſeem void of natural affection, for *they ſhall not look back to their children*, to provide for their ſafety, or ſo much as to ſee what becomes of them. Their *hands ſhall be ſo feeble* that they ſhall deſpair of carrying them off with them, and therefore they ſhall not care for ſeeing them, but leave them to take their lot; or, they ſhall be in ſuch a conſternation that they ſhall quite forget even thoſe pieces of themſelves. Let none be over-fond of their children, nor dote upon them, ſince ſuch diſtreſs may come, as that they may either wiſh they had none, or forget that they have, and have no heart to look upon them.

3. That the country of the Philiſtines ſhall be ſpoiled and laid waſte, and the other countries adjoining to them, and in alliance with them. It is a day to *ſpoil the Philiſtines, for the Lord will ſpoil them*, ver. 4. Note, Thoſe whom God will ſpoil, muſt needs be ſpoiled, for *if God be againſt them, who can be for them?* Tyre and Zidon were ſtrong and wealthy cities, and they uſed to help the Philiſtines in a ſtrait, but now they ſhall themſelves be involved in the common ruin, and God will cut off from them every *helper that remains.* Note, Thoſe that truſt to help from creatures, will find it cut off when they moſt need it, and will thereby be put into the utmoſt confuſion. Who the *remnant of the country of Caphtor* were is uncertain, but we find that the Caphterim were near akin to the Philiſtine, *Gen.* x. 14. and, probably, when their own country was deſtroyed, ſuch as remained came and ſettled with their kinſmen the Philiſtines, and were now ſpoiled with them. Some particular places are here named, *Gaza and Aſhkelon*, ver. 5. *baldneſs is come upon them*, the invaders have ſtripped them of all their ornaments, or, they have made themſelves bald in token of extreme grief; and they are *cut off*, with the other cities that were in the plain or valley about them. The products of their fruitful vallies ſhall be *ſpoiled*, and made a prey of by the conquerors.

4. That theſe calamities ſhould continue long. The prophet, in the foreſight of this, with his uſual tenderneſs, asks them firſt, *ver.* 5. *How long will ye cut your ſelves?* as men in extreme ſorrow and anguiſh do: O how tedious will the calamity be! not only cutting, but long cutting: but he turns from the effect to the cauſe, *they cut themſelves*, for the ſword of the Lord cuts them. And therefore, (1.) He beſpeaks that to be ſtill, *ver.* 6. *O thou ſword of the Lord, how long will it be ere thou be quiet?* He begs it would *put up itſelf into the ſcabbard*, would devour no more fleſh, drink no more blood. This expreſſeth the prophet's earneſt deſire to ſee an end of the war, looking with compaſſion, as became a man, even

even upon the Philiſtiues themſelves, when their country was made deſolate by the ſword. Note, War is the *ſword of the Lord*, with it he puniſheth the crimes of his enemies, and pleads the cauſe of his own people. When war is once begun it often laſts long; the ſword once drawn doth not quickly find the way into the ſcabbard again; nay, ſome, when they draw the ſword, will throw away the ſcabbard, for they *delight in war*. So deplorable are the deſolations of war, that the bleſſing of peace cannot but be very deſirable. O that *ſwords might be beaten into plowſhares!* (2.) Yet he gives a ſatisfactory account of the continuance of the war, and ſtops the mouth of his own complaint, *ver.* 7. *How can it be quiet ſeeing the Lord hath given it a charge* againſt ſuch and ſuch places, particularly ſpecified in its commiſſion? *there hath he appointed it.* Note, 1. That the ſword of war hath its charge from the Lord of hoſts; every bullet hath ſo, you call them blind bullets, but they are directed by an all-ſeeing God: the war it ſelf has ſo; he ſaith to it, *Go, and it goes; come, and it comes; do this, and it doth it*; for he is commander in chief. 2. When the ſword is drawn, we cannot expect it ſhould be ſheathed till it has fulfilled its charge. As the word of God, ſo his rod and his ſword ſhall accompliſh that for which he ſends them.

CHAP. XLVIII.

Moab is next ſet to the bar before Jeremiah the prophet, whom God had conſtituted judge over nations and kingdoms, from his mouth to receive its doom. Iſaiah's predictions concerning Moab had had their accompliſhment, we had the predictions Iſa. xv. and xvi. *and the like* Amos ii. 1. *and they were fulfilled when the Aſſyrians under Salmanaſſar invaded and diſtreſſed Moab. But this is a prophecy of the deſolations of Moab by the Chaldeans, which were accompliſhed under Nebuzar-adan, about five years after he had deſtroyed Jeruſalem. Here is,* (1.) *The deſtruction foretold, that it ſhould be great and general, ſhould extend itſelf to all parts of the country,* ver. 1,—6, 8. *and again,* ver. 21, — 25, 34. *That ſpoilers ſhould come upon them, and force ſome to flee,* ver. 9. *ſhould carry many into captivity,* ver. 12, 46. *that the enemy ſhould come ſhortly,* ver. 16. *come ſwiftly and ſurprize them,* ver. 40,41. *that he ſhould make through work,* ver. 10, *and lay the country quite waſte, though it was very ſtrong,* ver. 14, 15. *that there ſhould be no eſcaping,* ver. 42, 45. *that this ſhould force them to quit their idols,* ver. 13, 35. *and put an end to all their joy,* ver. 33, 34. *their neighbours ſhall lament them,* ver. 17, —19. *and the prophet himſelf doth,* ver. 31, 36, &c. (2.) *The cauſes of this deſtruction aſſigned, it was ſin that brought this ruin upon them, their pride and ſecurity, and carnal confidence,* ver. 7, 11, 14, 29. *and their contempt of, and enmity to God and his people,* ver. 26, 27, 30. (3.) *A promiſe of the reſtoration of Moab,* ver. 47.

1. AGainſt Moab thus ſaith the LORD of hoſts, the God of Iſrael, Wo unto Nebo, for it is ſpoiled: Kiriathaim is confounded *and* taken, Miſgab is confounded and diſmayed. 2. *There ſhall be* no more praiſe of Moab: in Heſhbon they have deviſed evil againſt it; come and let us cut it off from *being* a nation; alſo thou ſhalt be cut down, O Madmen, the ſword ſhall purſue thee. 3. A voice of crying *ſhall be* from Horonaim, ſpoiling and great deſtruction. 4. Moab is deſtroyed, her little ones have cauſed a cry to be heard. 5. For in the going up of Luhith, a continual weeping ſhall go up; for in the going down of Horonaim the enemies have heard a cry of deſtruction. 6. Flee, ſave your lives, and be like the heath in the wilderneſs. 7. ¶ For becauſe thou haſt truſted in thy works and in thy treaſures, thou ſhalt alſo be taken, and Chemoſh ſhall go forth into captivity *with* his prieſts and his princes together. 8. And the ſpoiler ſhall come upon every city, and no city ſhall eſcape: the valley alſo ſhall periſh, and the plain ſhall be deſtroyed, as the LORD hath ſpoken. 9. Give wings unto Moab, that it may flee and get away: for the cities thereof ſhall be deſolate, without any to dwell therein. 10. Curſed *be* he that doth the work of the LORD deceitfully, and curſed *be* he that keepeth back his ſword from blood. 11. ¶ Moab hath been at eaſe from his youth, and he hath ſettled on his lees, and hath not been emptied from veſſel to veſſel, neither hath he gone into captivity: therefore his taſte remained in him, and his ſcent is not changed. 12. Therefore behold, the days come, ſaith the LORD, that I will ſend unto him wanderers that ſhall cauſe him to wander, and ſhall empty his veſſels and break their bottles. 13. And Moab ſhall be aſhamed of Chemoſh, as the houſe of Iſrael was aſhamed of Beth-el their confidence.

We may obſerve in theſe verſes,

1. The author of Moab's deſtruction, it is *the Lord of hoſts*, that has armies, all armies at his command, and the God of Iſrael, *ver.* 1. who will herein plead the cauſe of his Iſrael againſt a people that has always been vexatious to them, and will puniſh them now for the injuries done to Iſrael of old, though Iſrael was forbidden to meddle with them, *Deut.* ii. 9. therefore the deſtruction of Moab is called *the work of the Lord*, ver. 10. for it is he that pleads for Iſrael: and his work will exactly agree with his word, *ver.* 8.

2. The inſtruments of it. *Spoilers ſhall come*, ver. 8. ſhall come with a ſword, a ſword that ſhall *purſue them*, ver. 2. *I will ſend unto him wanderers*, ſuch as come from afar, as if they were vagrants, or had miſſed their way, but they ſhall *cauſe him to wander*; they ſeem as wanderers themſelves, but they ſhall make the Moabites to be really wanderers, ſome to flee, and others to be carried into captivity. Theſe deſtroyers ſtir up themſelves to do execution; they *have deviſed evil againſt Heſhbon*, one of the principal cities of Moab, and they aim at no leſs than the ruin of the kingdome, *come, and let us cut it off from being a nation*, ver. 2. nothing leſs will ſerve the turn of the invaders, they come not to plunder it, but to ruin it. The prophet, in God's name, engageth them to make through work of it, *ver.* 10. *Curſed be he that doth the work of the Lord deceitfully*, this bloody work, this deſtroying work, though it goes againſt the grain with men of compaſſion, yet it is *the work of the Lord*, and muſt not be done by the halves. The Chaldeans have it in charge, by a ſecret inſtinct, (ſaith Mr. Gataker) to deſtroy the Moabites, and therefore they muſt not ſpare, muſt not, out of fooliſh pity, *keep back their ſword from blood*, they would thereby bring a ſword, and a curſe with it upon themſelves, as Saul did by ſparing the Amalekites; and Ahab by letting Benhadad go: *Thy life ſhall go for his life.* To this work is applied that general rule, given to all that are employed in any ſervice for God, *Curſed be he that doth the work of the Lord deceitfully*, or negligently, that pretends to do it, but doth it not to purpoſe, makes a ſhew of ſerving God's glory, but is really ſerving his own ends, and carries on the work of the Lord no further than will ſuit his own purpoſes; or that is ſlothful in buſineſs for God, and takes neither care nor pains to do it as it ſhould be done, *Mal.* i. 14. Let not ſuch deceive themſelves, for God will not thus be mocked.

3. The woful inſtances and effects of this deſtruction: The cities ſhall be laid in ruins, they ſhall be *ſpoiled*, ver. 1. and cut down, *ver.* 2. they ſhall be *deſolate*, ver. 9. *without any to dwell therein*: there ſhall be no houſes to dwell in, or no people to dwell in them, or no ſafety and eaſe to thoſe that would dwell in them. *Every city ſhall be ſpoiled, and no city ſhall eſcape.* The ſtrongeſt city ſhall not be able to ſecure it ſelf againſt the enemies power, nor ſhall the fineſt city be able to recommend it ſelf to the enemies pity and favour. The *country* alſo ſhall be waſted, the *valley ſhall periſh*, and the *plain be deſtroyed*, ver. 8. The corn and the flocks that uſed to cover the plains, and make the vallies rejoice, ſhall all be deſtroyed, eaten up, trodden down, or carried off. The moſt ſacred perſons ſhall not eſcape, the *prieſts and princes ſhall go together into captivity.* Nay, Chemoſh, the god they worſhip, who they expect ſhould protect them, ſhall ſhare with them in the ruin, his temple ſhall be laid in aſhes, and his image carried away with the reſt of the ſpoil. Now the conſequence of all this will be, (1.) Great ſhame and confuſion; *Kirjathaim is confounded*, and Miſgah is ſo. They ſhall be aſhamed of the mighty boaſts they have ſometimes made of their cities: *There ſhall be no more vaunting in Moab concerning Heſhbon*; ſo it might be read, *ver.* 2. they ſhall no more brag of the ſtrength of that city, when the evil which is deſigned againſt it is brought upon it. Nor ſhall they any more boaſt of their gods, *ver.* 13. they *ſhall be aſhamed of Chemoſh*, aſhamed of all the prayers they made to, and all the confidence they put in, that dunghil deity: as *Iſrael was aſhamed of Beth-el*, of the golden calf they had at Beth-el, which they confided in as their protector, but were deceived in, for it was not able to ſave them from the Aſſyrians; nor ſhall Chemoſh be able to ſave the Moabites from the Chaldeans. Note, Thoſe that will not be convinced and made aſhamed of the folly of their idolatry by the word of God, ſhall be convinced and made aſhamed of it by the judgments of God, when they ſhall find, by woful experience, the utter inability of the gods they have ſerved to do them any ſervice. (2.) There will be great ſorrow; there is a *voice of crying* heard, *ver.* 3. and the cry is nothing but *ſpoiling and great deſtruction*: alas, alas, *Moab is deſtroyed, ver.* 4. The great ones having quitted the cities to ſhift for their own ſafety, even the *little ones have cauſed a cry to be heard*, the meaner ſort of people, or the little children, the innocent harmleſs ones, whoſe cties at ſuch a time are the moſt piteous. Go up to the hills, go down to the vallies, and you meet with *continual weeping*, weeping with weeping, all are in tears, you meet none with dry eyes. Even the enemies have heard the cry, from whom it had been policy to conceal it, for they will be animated and encouraged by it; but it is ſo great it cannot be hid. (3.) There will be great hurry; they will cry to one another, away, away, *flee, ſave your lives*, ver. 6. ſhift for your own ſafety, with all imaginable ſpeed, though you eſcape as bare and naked as the *heath*, or grig, or dry ſhrub *in the wilderneſs*; think

not of carrying away any thing you have. for it may coſt you your life to attempt it, *Matt.* xxiv. 16, 17, 18. Take ſhelter, though it be in a barren wilderneſs, that you may have your lives for a prey. The danger will come ſuddenly and ſwiftly, and therefore *give wings unto Moab*, ver. 9. that would be the greateſt kindneſs you could do them, that is it that they will call for, *O that we had wings like a dove!* for unleſs they had wings and could fly, there will be no eſcaping.

4. The ſins for which God will now reckon with Moab, and which juſtify God in theſe ſevere proceedings againſt them.

(1.) It is becauſe they have been ſecure, and have truſted in their wealth and ſtrength, *in their works*, and *in their treaſures*, *ver.* 7. They had taken a great deal of pains to fortify their cities, and make large works about them, and to fill their exchequer and private coffers; ſo that they thought themſelves in as good a poſture for war as any people could be, and that none durſt invade them, and therefore ſet danger at defiance, they truſted *in the abundance of their riches, and ſtrengthned themſelves in their wickedneſs*, Pſal. lii. 7. Now, for this reaſon, that they may have a ſenſible conviction of the vanity and folly of their carnal confidences, God will ſend an enemy that ſhall maſter their works and rifle their treaſures. Note, We forfeit the comfort of that creature, which we repoſe that confidence in that ſhould be repoſed in God only. The reed will break that is leaned upon.

(2.) It is becauſe they have not made a right improvement of the days of their peace and proſperity, *ver.* 11. 1. They had been long undiſturbed: *Moab hath been at eaſe from his youth.* It was an ancient kingdom before Iſrael was, and had enjoyed great tranquillity, though a ſmall country, and ſurrounded with potent neighbours: God's Iſrael was afflicted from their youth, *Pſal.* cxxix. 1, 2. but *Moab at eaſe from his youth:* he hath *not been emptied from veſſel to veſſel*, has not known any troubleſome weakning changes, but is as wine kept on the lees, and not racked or drawn off, by which it retains its ſtrength and body. He has not been unſettled, nor any way made uneaſy; he has not *gone into captivity*, as Iſrael hath often done, and yet Moab a wicked idolatrous nation, and one of the confederates againſt *God's hidden ones*, Pſal. lxxxiii. 6. Note, There are many that perſiſt in unrepented iniquity, and yet enjoy uninterrupted proſperity. 2. They had been as long corrupt and unreformed: He *hath ſettled on his lees*, he hath been ſecure and ſenſual in his proſperity, hath reſted in it, and fetched all the ſtrength and life of the ſoul from it, as the wine from the lees; his taſte remained in him, and his ſcent is not changed: he is ſtill the ſame, as bad as ever he was. Note, While bad people are as happy as they uſed to be in the world, it is no marvel if they are as bad as they uſed to be. They have no changes of their peace and proſperity, *therefore they fear not God*, their hearts and lives are unchanged, *Pſal.* lv. 19.

14. ¶ How ſay ye, We *are* mighty and ſtrong men for the war? 15. Moab is ſpoiled and gone up *out of* her cities, and his choſen young men are gone down to the ſlaughter, ſaith the King, whoſe name *is* the LORD of hoſts. 16. The calamity of Moab *is* near to come, and his affliction haſteth faſt. 17. All ye that are about him bemoan him, and all ye that know his name, ſay, How is the ſtrong ſtaff broken, *and* the beautiful rod! 18. Thou daughter that doſt inhabit Dibon, come down from *thy* glory, and ſit in thirſt; for the ſpoiler of Moab ſhall come upon thee, *and* he ſhall deſtroy thy ſtrong holds. 19. O inhabitant of Aroer, ſtand by the way, and eſpy, aſk him that fleeth, and her that eſcapeth, *and* ſay, What is done? 20. Moab is confounded, for it is broken down: howl and cry, tell ye it in Arnon, that Moab is ſpoiled, 21. And judgment is come upon the plain country; upon Holon, and upon Jahazah, and upon Mephaath, 22. And upon Dibon, and upon Nebo, and upon Beth-diblathaim, 23. And upon Kiriathaim, and upon Beth-gamul, and upon Beth-meon, 24. And upon Kirioth, and upon Bozrah, and upon all the cities of the land of Moab, far or near. 25. The horn of Moab is cut off, and his arm is broken, ſaith the LORD. 26. ¶ Make ye him drunken: for he magnified *himſelf* againſt the LORD: Moab alſo ſhall wallow in his vomit, and he alſo ſhall be in deriſion. 27. For was not Iſrael a deriſion unto thee? was he found among thieves? for ſince thou ſpakeſt of him, thou ſkippeſt for joy. 28. O ye that dwell in Moab, leave the cities, and dwell in the rock, and be like the dove *that* maketh her neſt in the ſides of the holes mouth. 29. We have heard the pride of Moab (he is exceeding proud) his loftineſs, and his arrogancy, and his pride, and the haughtineſs of his heart. 30. I know his wrath, ſaith the LORD, but *it ſhall* not *be* ſo, his lies ſhall not ſo effect *it*. 31. Therefore will I howl for Moab, and I will cry out for all Moab, *mine heart* ſhall mourn for the men of Kir-heres. 32. O vine of Sibmah, I will weep for thee, with the weeping of Jazer; thy plants are gone over the ſea, they reach *even* to the ſea of Jazer, the ſpoiler is fallen upon thy ſummer-fruits, and upon thy vintage. 33. And joy and gladneſs is taken from the plentiful field, and from the land of Moab, and I have cauſed wine to fail from the wine-preſſes, none ſhall tread with ſhouting, *their* ſhouting *ſhall be* no ſhouting. 34. From the cry of Heſhbon *even* unto Elealeh, *and even* unto Jahaz have they uttered their voice, from Zoar *even* unto Horonaim, *as* an heifer of three years old: for the waters alſo of Nimrim ſhall be deſolate. 35. Moreover, I will cauſe to ceaſe in Moab, ſaith the LORD, him that offereth in the high places, and him that burneth incenſe to his gods. 36. Therefore mine heart ſhall ſound for Moab like pipes, and mine heart ſhall ſound like pipes for the men of Kir-heres: becauſe the riches *that* he hath gotten are periſhed. 37. For every head *ſhall be* bald, and every beard clipt: upon all the hands *ſhall be* cuttings, and upon the loins ſackcloth. 38. *There ſhall be* lamentation generally upon all the houſe-tops of Moab, and in the ſtreets thereof: for I have broken Moab like a veſſel, wherein *is* no pleaſure, ſaith the LORD. 39. They ſhall howl, *ſaying*, How is it broken down? how hath Moab turned the back with ſhame? ſo ſhall Moab be a deriſion, and a diſmaying to all them about him. 40. For thus ſaith the LORD, Behold, he ſhall fly as an eagle, and ſhall ſpread his wings over Moab. 41. Kerioth is taken, and the ſtrong holds are ſurpriſed, and the mighty mens hearts in Moab at that day ſhall be as the heart of a woman in her pangs. 42. And Moab ſhall be deſtroyed from *being* a people, becauſe he hath magnified *himſelf* againſt the LORD. 43. Fear, and the pit, and the ſnare *ſhall be* upon thee, O inhabitant of Moab, ſaith the LORD. 44. He that fleeth from the fear, ſhall fall into the pit, and he that getteth up out of the pit, ſhall be taken in the ſnare: for I will bring upon it, *even* upon Moab, the year of their viſitation, ſaith the LORD. 45. They that fled, ſtood under the ſhadow of Heſhbon, becauſe of the force: but a fire ſhall come forth out of Heſhbon, and a flame from the midſt of Sihon, and ſhall devour the corner of Moab, and the crown of the head of the tumultuous ones. 46. Wo be unto thee, O Moab, the people of Chemoſh periſheth: for thy ſons are taken captives, and thy daughters captives. 47. ¶ Yet will I bring again the captivity of Moab in the latter days, ſaith the LORD. Thus far *is* the judgment of Moab.

The deſtruction is here further propheſied of very largely, and with a great copiouſneſs and variety of expreſſion, and very pathetically and in moving language, deſigned not only to awaken them by a national repentance and reformation to prevent the trouble, or by a perſonal repentance and reformation to prepare for it, but to affect us with the calamitous ſtate of human life, which is liable to ſuch lamentable occurrences; and with the power of God's anger, and the terror of his judgments, when he comes forth to contend with a provoking people. In reading this long roll of threatnings, and meditating the terror of them, it will be of more uſe to us to keep this in our eye, and to get our hearts thereby poſſeſſed with a holy awe of God, and of his wrath, than to enquire critically into all the lively figures and metaphors here uſed.

1. It is a ſurprizing deſtruction, and very ſudden, that is here threatned. They were very ſecure, thought themſelves *ſtrong for war*, and able to deal with the moſt powerful enemy, *ver.* 14. and yet the calamity is near, and he is not able to keep it off, nor ſo much as to keep the enemy long in parley, for *the affliction haſtens faſt*, ver. 16. and will ſoon come to a criſis. The enemy ſhall *fly as an eagle*, ſo ſwiftly, ſo ſtrongly ſhall he come, *ver.* 40. as an eagle flies upon his prey, and he ſhall *ſpread his wings*, the wings of his army over Moab; he ſhall ſurround it that none may eſcape. *The ſtrong holds* of Moab are taken by *ſurprize*, ver. 41. ſo that all their ſtrength ſtood them in no ſtead; and this made *the hearts* even of *their mighty men to fail*, for they had not time to recollect the conſiderations that might have animated them. It requires a more than ordinary degree of courage not to be *afraid of ſudden fear.*

2. It is an utter deſtruction, and ſuch as lays Moab all in ruins. *Moab is ſpoiled*, ver. 15. quite ſpoiled, is *confounded and broken down*, ver. 20. their cities are laid in aſhes, or ſeized by the enemy, ſo that they are forced to quit them, *ver.* 15. Divers cities are

are here named, upon which judgment is come, and the list concludes with an *&c. cetera*; what need he mention more particulars, when it comes *upon all the cities of Moab* in general, *far and near*, ver. 21,—24. Note, When iniquity is universal, we have reason to expect that calamity should be so too. The kingdom is deprived of its dignity and authority, *the horn of Moab is cut off*; of its strength and power, both offensive and defensive, *his arm is broken*, that he can neither give a blow, nor save a blow, *ver.* 25. Is the youth of the kingdom the strength and beauty of it? *His chosen young men are gone down to the slaughter*, ver. 15. they went down to the battle, promising themselves that they should return victorious, but God told them they went *down to the slaughter*; so sure are they to fall, against whom God fights! In a word, *Moab shall be destroyed from being a people*, ver. 42. Those that are enemies to God's people, will soon be made no people.

3. It is a lamentable destruction, it will be just matter of mourning, and will turn joy into heaviness.

(1.) The prophet that foretels it doth himself lament it, and mourns at the very foresight of it, from a principle of compassion to his fellow creatures, and concern for the human nature: The prophet will himself *howl for Moab*, his very *heart shall mourn for* them, *ver.* 31. he will *weep for the wine of Sibmah*, ver. 31. his *heart sound like pipes for Moab*, ver. 36. Though the destruction of Moab would prove him a true prophet, yet he could not think of it without trouble. The ruin of sinners is no pleasure to God, and therefore should be a pain to us; even those that give warning of it should lay it to heart. These passages, and many others in this chapter, are much the same with what Isaiah had used in his prophecies against Moab, *Isa.* xv. and xvi. for though there was a long distance of time between that prophecy and this, yet they were both dictated by one and the same Spirit; and it becomes God's prophets to speak the language of those that went before them. It is no plagiarism sometimes to make use of old expressions, provided it be with new affections and applications.

(2.) The Moabites themselves shall lament; it will be the greatest mortification and grief imaginable to them. Those that sat in *glory*, in the midst of wealth and mirth, and all manner of pleasure, shall *sit in thirst*, in a dry and thirsty land, where no water, no comfort is, *ver.* 18. It is time to *sit in thirst*, and inure themselves to hardship, when *the spoiler is come*, that will strip them of all, and empty them. The Moabites in the remote corners of the country, that are furthest from the danger, will be inquisitive how the matter goes, what news from the army, will ask every one *that escapeth, What is done?* ver. 19. And when they are told that all is gone, that the invader is the conqueror, they will *howl and cry*, in bitterness and anguish of spirit, *ver.* 20. they will abandon themselves to solitude, to lament the desolations of their country, they will *leave the cities* that used to be full of mirth, *and dwell in the rock*, where they may have their fill of melancholy: They shall no more be singing birds, but mourning birds, *like the dove*, ver. 28. *the doves of the vallies*, Ezek. vii. 16. Those that give up themselves to mirth, let them know that God can soon change their note. Their sorrow shall be so very extream, that they shall make themselves *bald, and cut* themselves, *ver.* 37. which were expressions of a desperate grief, such as tempted men to be even their own destroyers. *Job* indeed *rent his mantle, and shaved his head*, but he did not cut himself. When the flood of passion riseth never so high, wisdom and grace must set bounds to it, set banks to it, to restrain it from such barbarities. The sorrow shall be universal, *ver.* 38. *There shall be a general lamentation upon all the house-tops of Moab*, where they worshipped their idols, to whom they shall in vain bemoan themselves, *and in* all *the streets*, where they conversed with one another, for they shall be free in communicating their griefs and fears, and in propagating them; for they see all lost; *I have broken Moab like a vessel wherein is no pleasure*, which shall not be regarded, and cannot be pieced again. That which Moab used to rejoice in, was their pleasant fruits, and the abundance of their rich wines: The delights of sense were all the matter of their joy: Take away these, destroy their gardens and vineyards, and you make *all their mirth to cease*, Hos. ii. 11, 12. There is great weeping when their plants are transplanted, *are gone over the sea*, ver. 32. are carried into other countries to be planted there. *The spoiler is fallen upon thy summer-fruits, and upon thy vintage*, and that is it that makes *the cry of Heshbon* to reach *even to Elealeh*, ver. 34. *Take joy and gladness from the plentiful field, and* you take it *from the land of Moab*, ver. 33. If *the wine fail from the wine-presses*, that used to be trodden with acclamations of joy, all their gladness is cut off: Take away *that shouting*, and there *shall be no shouting*. Note, Those who make the delights of sense their chief joy, their exceeding joy, since those are things they may easily be deprived of in a little time, subject themselves to the tyranny of the greatest grief; whereas they that rejoice in God, may do that even when *the fig-tree doth not blossom, and there is no fruit in the vine*. These Moabites lost not only their wine, but their water too, even *the waters of Nimrim shall be desolate*, ver. 34. and therefore their grief grew extravagantly loud and noisy, and their lamentations were heard in all places like the lowing of *a heifer of three years old*. The expressions here are borrowed from *Isa.* xv. 5, 6.

(3.) All their neighbours are called to mourn with them, and to condole their ruin, *ver.* 17. *All ye that are about him, bemoan him*. Let him have that allay to his grief, let him see himself pitied by the adjoining countries. Nay, let those at a distance that do but *know his name*, and have heard of his fame, take notice of his fall, and *say, How is the strong staff broken*, whose strength was the terror of its enemies, *and the beautiful rod!* whose beauty was the pride of its friends. Let the nations take notice of this, and receive instruction: Let none be puffed up with, or put confidence in their strength or beauty, for neither will be a security against the judgments of God.

4. It is a shameful destruction, and such as shall expose them to contempt. *Moab is made drunk*, ver. 26. and he that is made drunk is made vile, he *shall wallow in his vomit*, and become an odious spectacle, *and shall* justly *be in derision*. Let the Moabites be intoxicated with the cup of God's wrath, till they stagger and fall, and be brought to *their wits end*, and make themselves ridiculous by the wildness not only of their passions, but of their counsels. And, again, *ver.* 39. *Moab shall be a derision, and a dismaying to all about him*, they shall laugh at the fall of the pomp and power he was so proud of. Note, They that are haughty are preparing reproach and ignominy for themselves.

5. It is the destruction of that which is dear to them; not only of their summer-fruits, and their vintage, but of their wealth, *ver.* 36. *The riches that he hath gotten are perished*, though he thought he had laid them up very safe, and promised himself a long enjoyment of them, yet they are gone. Note, The money that is hoarded in the chest, is as liable to perishing, as the summer-fruits that lie exposed in the open fields. Riches are shedding things, and, like dust, as they are, slip through our fingers then when we are in most care to hold them fast, and gripe them hard. Yet this is not the worst neither, even those whose religion was false and foolish, were fond of it above any thing, and, such as it was, would not part with it; and therefore, though it was really a promise, yet to them it was a threatning, *ver.* 35. that God *will cause to cease him that offereth in the high places*, for the high places shall be destroyed, and the fields of offerings shall be laid waste, and the priests themselves *that burnt incense to their gods*, shall be slain or carried into captivity, *ver.* 7. Note, It is only the true religion, and the worship and service of the true God, that will stand us in stead in a day of trouble.

6. It is a just and righteous destruction, and that which they have deserved and brought upon themselves by sin.

(1.) The sin which they had been most notoriously guilty of, and for which God now reckoned with them, was pride. It is mentioned six times, *ver.* 29. *We have* all *heard of the pride of Moab*, his neighbours took notice of it, it has testified to his face, as Israel's did, *he is exceeding proud*, and grows worse and worse: Observe *his loftiness, his arrogancy, his pride, his haughtiness*; the multiplying of words to the same purpose, intimates, in how many instances he discovered his pride, and how offensive it was both to God and man: It was charged upon them, *Isa.* xvi. 6. but here it is expressed more largely than there: Since then they had been under humbling providences, and yet were unhumbled; nay, they grew more arrogant and haughty, which plainly marked them for that utter destruction which pride is the forerunner of. Two instances are here given of the pride of Moab: 1. He had carried it insolently towards God. He must be brought down with shame, *ver.* 26. for *he* hath *magnified himself against the Lord*; and, again, *ver.* 42. he *shall be destroyed from being a people*, for this very reason. The Moabites preferred Chemosh before Jehovah, and thought themselves a match for the God of Israel, whom they set at defiance. 2. He had carried it scornfully towards Israel, particularly in their late troubles; therefore Moab shall fall into the same troubles, into the same hands, and be a derision, for Israel was *a derision to him*, ver. 26, 27. The generality of the Moabites, when they heard of the calamities and desolations of their neighbours the Jews, instead of lamenting them, rejoiced in them, as if they had been *thieves* taken in the act of robbing; as oft as they spoke of them they *skipped for joy*. Many, in such a case, entertain in their minds a secret pleasure at the fall of those they had a dislike to, who yet have so much discretion as to conceal it, it is so invidious a thing; but the Moabites industriously proclaimed their joy, and avowed the enmity they had to Israel, triumphing over every Israelite they met with in distress, and laughing at him; which was as inhuman as it was impious, and an impudent affront both to man, whose nature they were of, and to God, whose name they were called by. Note, Those that deride others in distress, will justly and certainly, sooner or later, come into distress themselves, and be had in derision. Those that are *glad at calamities*, especially the calamities of God's church, *shall not* long *go unpunished*.

(2.) Besides this, they had been guilty of malice against God's people, and treachery in their dealings with them, *ver.* 30. They made a jest of the desolations of Judah and Jerusalem, and pretended, when they laughed at them, it was but in sport, and to make themselves merry; but, saith God, *I know his wrath*, I know it comes from the old enmity he hath to the seed of Abraham, and the worshippers of the true God: *I know* he thinks these calamities of the Jewish nation will end in their utter extirpation: He now tells the Chaldeans what ill people the Jews are, and irritates them against them, *but it shall not be so*, as he expects, *his lies*

shall

ſhall not ſo effect it: The nation, whoſe fall they triumph in, ſhall recover it ſelf. Some read it, *I know his rage, Is it not ſo?* (Is he not very furious againſt the people of God?) And *his lies I know* alſo, *Do they not do ſo?* Do they not bely them? Note, All the fury and all the falſhood of the church's enemies is perfectly known to God, whatever the pretences are with which they think to cover it, *Iſa.* xxxvii. 28.

7. It is a complicated deſtruction, and, by one inſtance after another, will at length be compleated; for thoſe that make their eſcape from one judgment, ſhall periſh by another: *Fear, and the pit, and the ſnare ſhall be upon them*, ver. 43. There ſhall be fear to drive them into the pit, and a ſnare to hold them faſt in it, when they are in it; ſo that they ſhall neither eſcape from the deſtruction, nor eſcape out of it. What was ſaid of ſinners in general, *Iſa.* xxiv. 17, 18. that they who *flee from the fear, ſhall fall into the pit*; and they who come *up out of the pit, ſhall be taken in the ſnare*; is here particularly foretold concerning the ſinners of Moab, *ver.* 44. for it is *the year of their viſitation*, when God comes to reckon with them, and will be *known by the judgments which he executeth*, for he is *the King, whoſe name is the Lord of hoſts*, ver. 15. he is not only *the King*, that has authority to give judgment, but he is *the Lord of hoſts*, that is able to do what he has determined. The figurative expreſſions uſed, *ver.* 44. are explained in one inſtance, *ver.* 45. *Thoſe that fled* out of the villages for fear of the enemy's forces, put themſelves *under the ſhadow of Heſhbon*, ſtood there, and ſuppoſed they ſtood ſafe, as now armies ſometimes retire under the cannon of a fortified city, and it is their protection; but here they ſhould be diſappointed, for when *they flee out of the pit, they fall into the ſnare*; Heſhbon, which they thought would have ſheltered them, devours them, as Moſes had foretold long ſince, *Numb.* xxi. 28. *A fire is gone out of Heſhbon*, and *a flame from the city of Sihon*, and devours thoſe that come from all *the corners of Moab*, and faſtens upon *the crown of the head of the tumultuous* noiſy *ones*, or of the revellers, or children of noiſe; not meant of the rude, clamorous multitude, but of the great men, that bluſter, and hector, and make a noiſe; the judgments of God ſhall light on them. Shall we hear the concluſion of this whole matter? we have it, *ver.* 46. *Wo be to thee, O Moab*, thou art undone; *the people* that worſhip *Chemoſh periſheth*, and is gone; farewel Moab: The *ſons* and *daughters*, the hopes of the next generation, are gone into captivity after the Jews, whoſe calamities they rejoiced in.

8. Yet it is not a perpetual deſtruction. The chapter concludes with a ſhort promiſe of their return out of *captivity in the latter days*. God that brings them into captivity, *will bring again* their *captivity*, ver. 47. Thus tenderly does God deal with Moabites, much more with his own people! even with Moabites he *will not contend for ever, nor be always wroth*. When Iſrael returned, Moab did; and, perhaps, the prophecy was intended chiefly for the encouragement of God's people, to hope for that ſalvation which even Moabites ſhall ſhare in. Yet it looks further to goſpel times; the Jews themſelves refer it to the days of the Meſſias; then the captivity of the Gentiles, under the yoke of ſin and Satan, ſhall be brought back by divine grace, which ſhall *make them free, free indeed*. This prophecy concerning Moab is long, but here it ends, it ends comfortably, *Thus far is the judgment of Moab.*

CHAP. XLIX.

The cup of trembling ſtill goes round, and the nations muſt all drink of it, according to the inſtructions given to Jeremiah, chap. xxv. 15. *This chapter puts it into the hands*, 1. *Of the Ammonites*, ver. 1,—6. 2. *Of the Edomites*, ver. 7,—22. 3. *Of the Syrians*, ver. 23,—27. 4. *Of the Kedarens, and the kingdoms of Hazor*, ver. 28,—33. 5. *Of the Elamites*, ver. 34,—39. *When Iſrael was ſcarcely ſaved, where ſhall all theſe appear?*

1. CONcerning the Ammonites, thus ſaith the LORD, Hath Iſrael no ſons? hath he no heir? why *then* doth their king inherit Gad, and his people dwell in his cities? 2. Therefore behold, the days come, ſaith the LORD, that I will cauſe an alarm of war to be heard in Rabbah of the Ammonites, and it ſhall be a deſolate heap, and her daughters ſhall be burnt with fire: then ſhall Iſrael be heir unto them that were his heirs, ſaith the LORD. 3. Howl, O Heſhbon, for Ai is ſpoiled: cry, ye daughters of Rabbah, gird ye with ſackcloth: lament and run to and fro by the hedges, for their king ſhall go into captivity, *and* his prieſts and his princes together. 4. Wherefore glorieſt thou in the vallies, thy flowing valley, O backſliding daughter? that truſted in her treaſures, *ſaying*, Who ſhall come unto me? 5. Behold, I will bring a fear upon thee, ſaith the LORD God of hoſts, from all thoſe that be about thee, and ye ſhall be driven out every man right forth, and none ſhall gather up him that wandreth. 6. And afterward I will bring again the captivity of the children of Ammon, ſaith the LORD.

The Ammonites were next both in kindred and neighbourhood to the Moabites, and therefore are next ſet to the bar: Their country joined to that of the two tribes and a half on the other ſide Jordan, and was but an ill neighbour; however, being a neighbour, they ſhall have a ſhare in theſe circular predictions.

(1.) An action is here brought in God's name againſt the Ammonites, for an illegal encroachment upon the rightful poſſeſſions of the tribe of Gad, that lay next them, *ver.* 1. A writ of enquiry is brought to diſcover what title they had to thoſe territories, which, upon the carrying away of the Gileadites, by the king of Aſſyria, (*2 Kings* xv. 29. *1 Chron.* v. 26.) were left almoſt diſpeopled, at leaſt unguarded, and an eaſy prey to the next invader. What! Doth it eſcheat *ob defectum ſanguinis? Hath Iſrael no ſons? Hath he no heir?* Are there no Gadites left, to whom the right of inheritance belongs? Or, if there were not, are there no Iſraelites, none left of Judah, that is nearer akin to them than you are? *Why then doth their king*, as if he were entitled to the forfeited eſtates, or Melcom, their idol, as if he had the diſpoſal of it to his worſhippers, *inherit Gad, and his people dwell in the cities*, which fell by lot to that tribe of God's people? Nay, there were ſons and heirs of their own body, *en ventre ſa mere*, and the Ammonites, to prevent their claim, moſt barbarouſly murdered them, *Amos* i. 13. *They ripped up the women with child of Gilead, that they might enlarge their border*; that, having ſeized it, none might riſe up hereafter to recover it from them: Thus *they magnified themſelves againſt their border*, and boaſted it was their own, *Zeph.* ii. 8. Note, Though among men might often prevails againſt right, yet that might ſhall be controlled by the Almighty, who *ſits in the throne, judging right*; and thoſe will find themſelves miſtaken, who think every thing their own that they can lay their hands on, or which none yet appears to lay claim to. As there is juſtice owing to owners, ſo alſo to their heirs, when they are dead, whom it is a great ſin to defraud, though they either know not their right, or know not how to come at it. This ſhall be reckoned for particularly, when injuries of this kind are done to God's people.

(2.) Judgment is here given againſt them for this violence.

1. Terrors ſhall come upon them. God *will cauſe an alarm of war to be heard*, even *in Rabbah*, their capital city, and a very ſtrong one, *ver.* 2. *The Lord God of hoſts*, that has all armies at his command, *will bring a fear upon them from all that be about them*, ver. 5. Note, God has many ways to terrify thoſe that have been a terror to his people.

2. Their cities ſhall be laid in ruins. *Rabbah*, the mother city, *ſhall be a deſolate heap, and her daughters*, the other cities that have a dependence upon her, and receive law from her as daughters, *ſhall be burnt with fire*; ſo that the inhabitants ſhall be forced to quit them, and they ſhall *cry*, and *gird themſelves with ſackcloth*, as having loſt all they have, and not knowing whither to betake themſelves.

3. Their country, which they were ſo proud of, ſhall be waſted, *ver.* 4. *Wherefore glorieſt thou in the vallies*, and *truſteſt in thy treaſures, O backſliding daughter?* They are charged with backſliding, or turning away from God, and from his worſhip, for they were the poſterity of righteous Lot. It is true, they had never been ſo in covenant with God as Iſrael was, yet all idolaters may be called backſliders, for the worſhip of the true God was prior to that of falſe gods. *They were untoward and refractory*, ſo ſome read it: And when they had forſaken their God, *they gloried in their vallies*, particularly one that was called *the flowing valley*, becauſe it flowed with all good things. Theſe they had violently taken away from Iſrael, and gloried in it when they had done. They gloried in the ſtrength of their vallies, ſo ſurrounded with mountains, that they were inacceſſible; gloried in the products of them, gloried *in the treaſures* they got together out of them, *ſaying, Who ſhall come unto me?* While they bathed themſelves in the pleaſures of their country, they flattered themſelves with a conceit that they ſhould never be diſturbed in the enjoyment of them; *to morrow ſhall be as this day*; therefore they ſet God and his judgments at defiance; they are proud, voluptuous and ſecure; but wherefore doſt thou do ſo? Note, Thoſe who backſlide, and turn away from God, have little reaſon, either to take a complacency, or to put a confidence in any worldly enjoyments whatſoever, *Hoſ.* ix. 1.

4. Their people, from the leaſt to the greateſt, ſhall be forced out of the country; ſome ſhall flee to ſeek for ſhelter, others ſhall be carried into captivity, ſo that their land ſhall be quite evacuated. *Their king and his princes*, nay, and Melcom, their god, *and his prieſts, ſhall go into captivity*, ver. 3. *and every man ſhall be driven out right forth*, ſhall take the next way, and make the beſt of it in his flight, *ver.* 5. forgetting *the vallies, the flowing vallies*, which now fail them. And, to compleat their miſery, *none ſhall gather up him that wandreth*, none ſhall open their doors to them, as Jael to Siſera, to entertain them; and thoſe that flee ſhall be ſo much in care to ſecure themſelves, that they ſhall not take notice of others, no, not of thoſe that are neareſt to them, that wander, and are at a loſs which way to go, as, *chap.* xlvii. 3.

5. Then

5. Then the country of the Ammonites shall fall into the hands of the remaining Israelites, *ver.* 3. *Then shall Israel be heir to them that were his heirs*, shall possess himself of their land, who had possessed themselves of his, by way of reprizal. Note, The equity of divine providence is to be acknowledged, when the losses of the injured are recompensed out of the unjust gains of the injurious. Though the enemies of God's Israel may make a prey of them for a while, the tables will shortly be turned.

(3.) Yet there is a prospect given them of mercy hereafter, *ver.* 6. as before to Moab: The day will come, when *the captivity of the children of Ammon will* be *brought again*; for so it is in human affairs, the wheel goes round.

7. ¶ Concerning Edom, thus saith the LORD of hosts, *Is* wisdom no more in Teman? is counsel perished from the prudent? is their wisdom vanished? 8. Flee ye, turn back, dwell deep, O inhabitants of Dedan, for I will bring the calamity of Esau upon him, the time *that* I will visit him. 9. If grape-gatherers come to thee, would they not leave *some* gleaning-grapes? if thieves by night, they will destroy till they have enough. 10. But I have made Esau bare, I have uncovered his secret places, and he shall not be able to hide himself: his seed is spoiled, and his brethren and his neighbours, and he *is* not. 11. Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve *them* alive, and let thy widows trust in me. 12. For thus saith the LORD, Behold, they whose judgment *was* not to drink of the cup, have assuredly drunken, and *art* thou he *that* shalt altogether go unpunished? thou shalt not go unpunished, but thou shalt surely drink *of it*. 13. For I have sworn by my self, saith the LORD, that Bozrah shall become a desolation, a reproach, a waste, and a curse, and all the cities thereof shall be perpetual wastes. 14. I have heard a rumour from the LORD, and an ambassador is sent unto the heathen, *saying*, Gather ye together and come against her, and rise up to the battle. 15. For lo, I will make thee small among the heathen, *and* despised among men. 16. Thy terribleness hath deceived thee, *and* the pride of thine heart, O thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, that holdest the height of the hill: though thou shouldest make thy nest as high as the eagle, I will bring thee down from thence, saith the LORD. 17. Also Edom shall be a desolation: every one that goeth by it, shall be astonished, and shall hiss at all the plagues thereof. 18. As in the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the neighbour *cities* thereof, saith the LORD: no man shall abide there, neither shall a son of man dwell in it. 19. Behold, he shall come up like a lion from the swelling of Jordan against the habitation of the strong: but I will suddenly make him run away from her, and who *is* a chosen *man that* I may appoint over her? for who *is* like me? and who will appoint me the time? and who *is* that shepherd that will stand before me? 20. Therefore hear the counsel of the LORD, that he hath taken against Edom, and his purposes that he hath purposed against the inhabitants of Teman: surely the least of the flock shall draw them out; surely he shall make their habitations desolate with them. 21. The earth is moved at the noise of their fall: at the cry, the noise thereof was heard in the Red sea. 22. Behold, he shall come up, and fly as the eagle, and spread his wings over Bozrah: and at that day shall the heart of the mighty men of Edom be as the heart of a woman in her pangs.

The Edomites come next to receive their doom from God, by the mouth of Jeremiah: They also were old enemies to the Israel of God, but their day will come to be reckoned with, and it is now at hand; and is foretold, not only for warning to them, but for comfort to the Israel of God, whose afflictions were very much aggravated by their triumphs over them, and joy in their calamity, *Psalm* cxxxvii. 7. Many of the expressions used in this prophecy *concerning Edom*, are borrowed from the prophecy of Obadiah, which is *concerning Edom*; for all the prophets being inspired by one and the same Spirit, there must needs be a wonderful harmony and agreement in their predictions.

Now here it is foretold,

1. That the country of Edom should be all wasted, and made desolate; that *the calamity of Esau* should be *brought upon him*, the calamity he has deserved, and God has long designed him, for his old sins, *ver.* 8. The time is at hand when God *will visit him*, and call him to an account, and then they shall *flee* from the sword, *turn back* from the battle, and *dwell deep* in some close caverns, where they shall hide themselves: All they have shall be carried off by the conqueror; whereas *grape-gatherers* will *leave some gleanings*, and even *thieves* know when *they have enough*, and *will destroy* no further; they that destroy them shall never be satiated, *ver.* 9, 10. they shall make *Esau* quite *bare*, shall strip the Edomites of all they have, shall find out ways and means to come at their most hidden treasure, shall discover even the *secret places*, where they thought to secure their wealth, and rifle them, so that they shall none of them save their wealth, no, nor save themselves or their children, that might be concealed in a little room: *He shall not be able to hide himself*, and *his seed* too *is spoiled*: *His brethren*, the Moabites, *and his neighbours*, the Philistines, whom he might have expected succours from, or at least shelter with, are spoiled as well as he, and disabled to do him any service: *And he is not*, or, *there is not he*, *there is none to him*, *none left him* that may say what follows, *ver.* 11. *Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive.* When they are flying, or dying, there shall be none left, no relation, no friend, no, not so much as any parish officers to take care of their wives and children that they leave behind. Edom is not, he is cut off, and gone; nor is there any to say, *Leave me thine orphans*. If the master of a family be cut off, or forced away, it is some comfort if he have a friend to leave his family with, whom he can confide in; but they shall have none such, for they shall all be involved in the same calamity. The Chaldee makes these to be the words of God to his people, distinguishing them from the Edomites in this calamity, and they read it, *But you, O house of Israel, you shall not leave your orphans, I will secure them, and let your widows rest on my word*: Whatever becomes of the widows and fatherless of the Edomites, I will take care of yours. Note, It is an unspeakable comfort to the people of God, when they are dying, that they may leave their surviving relations with God, may, in faith, commit them to him, and encourage them to trust in him; and though they cannot promise themselves great things in the world for them, yet they may hope that he will preserve them alive, always provided that they trust in him. Let the Edomites, for their part, count upon no other but to be made *a desolation*, and *a reproach*, for the decree is gone forth, God hath *sworn it by himself*, ver. 13. that their *cities shall be wasted*, nay, they *shall be perpetual wastes*, they shall be made mean and despicable; they had made a mighty figure, but God will make *them small among the heathen*; and they that despised God's people, shall themselves be *despised among men*, ver. 15. *Obad.* 2. nay, they shall be made monstrous, and even a prodigy, *ver.* 17. *Edom shall be* such a *desolation*, that every one that goes by *shall be astonished*: Nay, worse yet, they shall be made a terror, Edom shall be made like Sodom and Gomorrah, none shall care for coming near the ruins of it, *no man shall abide there*, ver. 18. such a frightful place shall it be made!

2. That the instruments of this destruction should be very resolute and formidable. They have their commission from God, he summons them into this service, *ver.* 14. *I have heard a rumour*, or report, *from the Lord*, heard it by the prophecy of Obadiah, heard it by a whisper to my self, that *an ambassador*, or herald, or messenger, *is sent to the* Gentiles, that are to lay Edom waste, *saying*, *Gather ye together*, muster all the forces ye can, *and come against her*; for, *ver.* 20. this is *the counsel that he hath taken against Edom*; the matter is settled, the decree is gone forth, and there is no resisting it; God has determined that Edom shall be laid waste, and then he that is to be employed in it shall come swiftly and strongly. Nebuchadrezzar is he, of whom it is here foretold, 1. That he *shall come up like a lion*, with fierceness and fury, like a lion enraged by *the swelling of Jordan*, overflowing his banks, which force him out of his covert, by the water-side, into the higher grounds, *ver.* 19. He shall come roaring, come to devour all that come in his way: He shall *come against the habitation of the strong*, the forts and castles; and I *will cause him to come suddenly into the land*, so the next words might well be read, so as to find them unprovided with necessaries for a defence; for I will look out *a chosen man to appoint over her*, to do this execution, a man fit for the purpose, one chosen out of the people; for when God has work to do, he will find out the fittest instruments to be employed in it: And in this, *Who is like me?* for choosing the instruments, and spiriting them for the work; and, *Who will appoint me the time?* i. e. who will challenge me, and fix a time and place to meet me? who will join issue with me in battle? And when I send a lion into the flock, *Who is that shepherd*, that can or dare stand before me, or against me, to oppose that lion, and think to rescue any of the flock? Note, When God has work to do of any kind, he will soon find those that are able to engage in it; and all the world cannot find those that are able to engage against it. Nay, if God will have Edom destroyed, and their people dislodged, there needs not a lion, a fierce lion, to do it, *even the least of the flock shall draw them out*, ver. 20. the meanest servant in Nebuchadrezzar's retinue, the weakest of all that follow his camp, shall *draw them out* for the slaughter, shall force them to flee, or to surrender, and *make their habitations desolate with them*. God can bring to pass the greatest works by instruments least likely. When the Chaldean army comes against the Edomites, all

all hands shall be employed, and the poorest soldier in it shall have a pluck at them. 2. Nebuchadrezzar shall come, not only like a lion, the king of beasts, but like an eagle, the king of birds, *ver.* 22. *He shall fly as the eagle* upon his prey, so swiftly, so strongly; shall clap his wings upon Bozrah, to secure it for himself, as before, *chap.* xlviii. 40. and immediately *the hearts of the mighty men* shall fail them, for they shall see he is an enemy that it is in vain to struggle with.

3. That the Edomites confidences should all fail them in the day of their distress. 1. They trusted to their wisdom, but that shall stand them in no stead; this is the first thing fastened upon in this prophecy against Edom, *ver.* 7. That nation used to be famous for wisdom, and their statesmen were thought to excel in politicks, and yet now they shall take such wrong measures in all their counsels, and be so baffled in all their designs, that people shall ask, with wonder, What is the matter with the Edomites? *Is wisdom no more in Teman?* Are the wise men of the east country (1 *Kings* iv. 30.) become fools? Are those at *their wits end*, that were thought to have the monopoly of prudence? *Is counsel perished from the understanding men?* It is so, when God is designing the ruin of a people; for whom he will destroy, he infatuates. See *Job* xii. 20. *Is their wisdom vanished? Is it tired?* so some; *Is it worn out?* so others; *Is it become useless?* so others. Yes, it will do them no service, when God comes forth to contend with them. 2. They trusted to their strength, but neither shall that avail them, *ver.* 16. They had been a terror to all their neighbours, every body feared them, and truckled to them, and this made them proud and conceited of themselves, and their own strength, and very secure; because no neighbour-nation durst meddle with them, they thought no nation in the world durst. Their country was much of it mountainous, having many passes which they thought themselves able to make good against any invader; but this terribleness of theirs deceived them, and so did their imaginary inaccessibleness; they did not prove so strong as they were formidable, nor so safe as they were secure. As high as they are, God will bring them down; for as *there is no wisdom*, so there is no might *against the Lord.* See these expressions, *Obad.* 3, 4, 8.

4. That their destruction should be inevitable, and very remarkable. 1. God hath determined it, *ver.* 12. he hath said it; nay, *ver.* 13. he hath *sworn it*, that *the Edomites shall not go unpunished*; but they shall *drink the cup of trembling*, which is put into the hands of all their neighbourr; even they, *whose judgment*, or doom, *was not to drink of the cup*, i. e. that had not so well deserved it as they had done, nations that had not been such enemies to Israel as they had been; or, Israel it self, that was God's peculiar people, and among whom there were many, very many, that kept his ordinances, upon which account they might have expected an exemption, and yet they had been made to drink of the bitter cup, and shall the Edomites think to pass it? No; they shall *surely drink of it.* Note, When God punisheth the less guilty, it is folly for the more guilty to promise themselves impunity; and when judgment begins at God's house, it will reach the strangers. 2. All the world shall take notice of it, *ver.* 21. *The earth is moved*, and all the nations put into a concern, *at the noise of their fall*; the news of it shall make them tremble. *The noise of the outcry is heard to the Red sea*, which flowed upon the coasts of Edom: So loud shall be the shouts of the conquerors, and the shrieks of the conquered, and such a mighty noise shall the news of this destruction of Idumea make in the nations, that it shall be heard among the ships that lie in the Red sea to take in lading, (1 *Kings* ix. 26.) and they shall carry the news of it to the remotest shores. Note, Those that have affected to make a noise with their pomp and power, their fall, when it comes, will make so much the greater noise.

23. ¶ Concerning Damascus. Hamath is confounded, and Arpad: for they have heard evil tidings, they are faint-hearted, *there is* sorrow on the sea, it cannot be quiet. 24. Damascus is waxed feeble, *and* turneth her self to flee, and fear hath seized on *her:* anguish and sorrows have taken her as a woman in travail. 25. How is the city of praise not left, the city of my joy? 26. Therefore her young men shall fall in her streets, and all the men of war shall be cut off in that day, saith the LORD of hosts. 27. And I will kindle a fire in the wall of Damascus, and it shall consume the palaces of Ben-hadad.

The kingdom of Syria lay north of Canaan, as that of Edom lay south, and thither we must now remove, and take a view of the approaching fate of that kingdom, which had been often vexatious to the Israel of God. Damascus was the metropolis of that kingdom, and the ruin of the whole is supposed in the ruin of that, yet Hamath and Arpad, two other considerable cities, are named, *ver.* 23. and *the palaces of Ben-hadad*, which he built, are particularly marked for ruin, *ver.* 27. as also, *Amos* i. 9. Some think Ben-hadad (the son of Hadad, either their idol, or one of their ancient kings, whence the rest descended) was a common name of the kings of Syria, as Pharaoh of the kings of Egypt. Now observe concerning the judgment of Damascus,

1. It begins with a terrible fright and faintheartedness. They *hear evil tidings*, that the king of Babylon, with all his force, is coming against them, and *they are confounded*, they know not what measures to take for their own safety, their souls are melted, *they are faint-hearted*, they have no spirit left them, they are like *the troubled sea, that cannot be quiet*, Isa. lvii. 20. or, like men *in a storm* at sea, *Psalm* cvii. 26. or, the sorrow that begins in the city shall go to the sea-coast, *ver.* 23. See how easily God can dispirit those nations that have been most celebrated for valour! *Damascus* now *waxeth feeble*, ver. 24. a city that thought she could have looked the most formidable enemy in the face, now *turns her self to flee*, and owns it is to no more purpose to think of contending with her fate, than for *a woman in* labour to contend with her pains, which she cannot escape, but must yield to. It was a *city of praise*, ver. 25. not praise to God, but to her self; a city much commended and admired by all strangers that visited it. It was a *city of joy*, where there was an affluence and confluence of all the delights of the sons of men, and abundance of mirth in the enjoyment of them. We read it (though it needs not) *the city of my joy*, which the prophet himself had sometimes visited with pleasure: Or, it may be the speech of the king lamenting the ruin of *the city of* his *joy.* But now it is all overwhelmed with fear and grief. Note, Those deceive themselves who place their happiness in carnal joys; for God, in his providence, can soon cast a damp upon them, and put an end to them. He can soon make a *city of praise* to be a reproach, and a *city of joy* to be a terror to it self.

2. It ends with a terrible fall and fire. 1. The inhabitants are slain, *ver.* 26. The *young men*, that should fight the enemy, and defend the city, *shall fall*, by the sword, *in her streets*; *and all the men of war*, mighty men, expert in war, and engaged in the service of their country, *shall be cut off.* 2. The city is laid in ashes, *ver.* 27. The *fire* is *kindled*, by the besiegers, *in the wall*, but it shall devour all before it, *the palaces of Ben-hadad* particularly, where so much mischief had formerly been hatched against God's Israel, for which it is now thus visited.

28. ¶ Concerning Kedar, and concerning the kingdoms of Hazor, which Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon shall smite, thus saith the LORD, Arise ye, go up to Kedar, and spoil the men of the east. 29. Their tents and their flocks shall they take away, they shall take to themselves their curtains and all their vessels, and their camels, and they shall cry unto them, Fear *is* on every side. 30. ¶ Flee, get you far off, dwell deep, O ye inhabitants of Hazor, saith the LORD; for Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon hath taken counsel against you, and hath conceived a purpose against you. 31. Arise, get you up unto the wealthy nation that dwelleth without care, saith the LORD, which have neither gates nor bars, *which* dwell alone. 32. And their camels shall be a booty, and the multitude of their cattle a spoil, and I will scatter into all winds them *that are* in the utmost corners, and I will bring their calamity from all sides thereof, saith the LORD. 33. And Hazor shall be a dwelling for dragons, *and* a desolation for ever; there shall no man abide there, nor *any* son of man dwell in it.

These verses foretel the desolation that Nebuchadrezzar and his forces should make among the people of Kedar, who descended from Kedar the son of Ishmael, and inhabited a part of Arabia the stony, and of the kingdoms, the petty principalities of Hazor, that joined to them, who, perhaps, were originally Canaanites, of the kingdom of Hazor in the north of Canaan, which had Jabin for its king, but, being driven thence, settled in the deserts of Arabia, and associated themselves with the Kedarens. Concerning this people we may here observe,

1. What was their present state and posture. They dwelt in *tents*, and had no walls but *curtains*, ver. 29. no fortified cities; they had *neither gates nor bars*, ver. 31. They were shepherds, and had no treasures, but stock upon land, no money, but flocks and camels: They had no soldiers among them, for they were in no fear of invaders; no merchants, for they *dwelt alone*, ver. 31. Those of other nations neither came among them, nor traded with them; but they lived within themselves, content with the products and pleasures of their own country. This was their manner of living, very different from that of the nations that were round about them. And, 1. They were very rich; though they had no trade, no treasures, yet they are here said to be a *wealthy nation*, ver. 31. because they had a sufficiency to answer all the occasions of human life, and they were content with it. Note, Those are truly rich that have enough to supply their necessities, and know when they have enough. We need not go to the treasures of kings and provinces, or the cash of merchants, to look for wealthy people, they may be found among shepherds *that dwell in tents.*

2. They

2. They were very easy, *they dwelt without care*, their wealth was such as no body envied them, or, if any did, they might come peaceably and enjoy the like, and therefore they fear no body. Note, Those that live innocently and honestly, may live very securely, though they have *neither gates nor bars*.

2. The design of the king of Babylon against them, and the descent he made upon them: *He hath taken counsel against you, and hath conceived a purpose against you*, ver. 30. That proud man resolves it shall never be said, that he, who had conquered so many strong cities, will leave those unconquered *that dwell in tents*. It was strange that eagle would stoop to catch these flies; that so great a prince should play at such small game; but all is fish that comes to the ambitious, covetous man's net. Note, It will not always secure men from suffering wrong, to be able to say they have done no wrong; not to have given offence will not be a defence against such men as Nebuchadrezzar. Yet, how unrighteous soever he was in doing it, God was righteous in directing it. These people had lived inoffensively among their neighbours, as many do, who yet, like them, are guilty before God; and it was to punish them for their offences against him, that God said, *ver.* 28. *Arise, go up to Kedar, and spoil the men of the east.* They will do it to gratify their own covetousness and ambition, but God orders it for the correcting of an unthankful people, and for warning to a careless world to expect trouble when they seem to be most safe. God saith to the Chaldeans, *ver.* 31. *Arise, get up to the wealthy nation that dwells without care*; go, and give them an alarm, that none may imagine *their mountain stands so strong that it cannot be moved.*

3. The great amazement that this put them into, and the great desolation hereby made among them: *They shall cry unto them*, i. e. those on the borders shall send the alarm into all parts of the country, which shall be put into the utmost confusion by it; they shall cry, *Fear is on every side*, we are surrounded by the enemy; the very terror of which shall drive them all to their feet, and they shall none of them have any heart to make resistance. The enemy shall *proclaim fear upon them*, or *against them, on every side*; they need not strike a stroke, they shall shout them out of their tents, *ver.* 29. Upon the first alarm they shall *flee, get far off*, and *dwell deep*, ver. 30. as the Edomites, *ver.* 8. And it will be found that this *fear on every side* is not groundless, for *their calamity* shall be *brought from all sides thereof*, ver. 32. No marvel there are *fears on every side*, when there are foes on every side. The issue will be, 1. What they have will be a prey to the Chaldeans; they shall *take to themselves their curtains and vessels*; though they are but plain and coarse, and they have better of their own, yet they shall take them for spite, and spoil for spoiling sake: *They shall carry away their tents and their flocks*, ver. 29. *Their camels* shall be a booty to those that came for nothing else, *ver.* 32. 2. It is not said that any of them shall be slain, for they attempt not to make any resistance, and their tents and flocks are accepted as a ransom of their lives; but they shall be dislodged and dispersed, though now they dwell *in the utmost corners*, out of the way, and therefore they think out of the reach of danger; by this character those people were distinguished, *chap.* ix. 26. and, xxv. 23. yet they shall from thence be *scattered into all winds*, into all parts of the world. Note, Privacy and obscurity is not always a protection and security: Many that affect to be strangers to the world, may yet by unthought of providences be forced into it; and those that live most retired, may have the same lot with those that thrust themselves forth, aud lie most exposed. 3. Their country shall lie uninhabited; for, lying remote, and out of all high-roads, and having neither cities nor lands inviting to strangers, none shall care to succeed them, so that *Hazor shall be a desolation for ever*, ver. 33. If busy men be displaced, many strive to get into their places, because they lived great; but here are easy, quiet men displaced, and *no man* cares to *abide* where they did, because they lived mean.

34. ¶ The word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah the prophet against Elam, in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, saying, 35. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Behold, I will break the bow of Elam, the chief of their might. 36. And upon Elam will I bring the four winds, from the four quarters of heaven, and will scatter them towards all those winds, and there shall be no nation whither the outcasts of Elam shall not come. 37. For I will cause Elam to be dismayed before their enemies, and before them that seek their life: and I will bring evil upon them, *even* my fierce anger, saith the LORD, and I will send the sword after them, till I have consumed them. 38. And I will set my throne in Elam, and will destroy from thence the king and the princes, saith the LORD. 39. ¶ But it shall come to pass in the latter days, *that* I will bring again the captivity of Elam, saith the LORD.

This prophecy is dated in the beginning of Zedekiah's reign; it is probable, the other prophecies, against the Gentiles, going before, were at the same time. The Elamites were the Persians, descended from Elam the son of Sem, *Gen.* x. 22. yet some think it was only that part of Persia which lay neareſt to the Jews, which was called Elymais, and adjoined to Media-Elam, had acted against God's Israel, *bare the quiver* in an expedition against them, *Isa.* xxii. 6. and therefore must be reckoned with among the rest. It is here foretold, in general, that God will *bring evil upon them, even* his *fierce anger*, and that is evil enough, it has *all evil in it*, ver. 37. In particular,

1. Their forces shall be disabled, and rendered uncapable to do them any service. The Elamites were famous archers, but, *Behold, I will break the bow of Elam*, ver. 35. will ruin their artillery, and then *the chief of their might* is gone. God often orders it so, that that which we most trust to, first fails us; and that which was *the chief of our might*, proves the least of our help.

2. Their people shall be dispersed. There shall come enemies against them from all parts of the world, and they shall all carry some of them away captives into their respective countries, while others shall flee, some one way, and some another, to shift for themselves, so that *there shall be no nation, whither the outcasts of Elam shall not come*, ver. 36. *The four winds* shall be brought upon them; the storm shall come sometimes from one point, and sometimes from another, to toss and hurry them several ways; and we know not from what point the wind of trouble may blow; but if God compass us with his favour we are safe, and may be easy, which way soever the storm comes. Fear shall drive them into other countries, they shall *be dismayed before their enemies*; but, as if that were not enough, *I will send the sword after them*, ver. 37. Note, God can make his judgments follow those, that think, by flight, to escape them, and to get out of the reach of them. *Evil pursues sinners.*

3. Their princes shall be destroyed, and the government quite changed, *ver.* 38. *I will set my throne in Elam.* The throne of Nebuchadrezzar shall be set there, or the throne of Cyrus, who began his conquests with Elymais. Or, it may be meant of the throne on which God sits for judgment; he will make them know that he reigns, that he *judgeth in the earth*, and that *kings and princes* are accountable to him, and that, as high as they are, he is above them. The king of Elam was famous of old, *Gen.* xiv. 1. Chedorlaomer was king of Elam, and a mighty man he was in his day; the nations about him served him; his successors, we may suppose, made a great figure; but the king of Elam is no more to God than another man: When God *sets his throne in Elam*, he *will destroy from thence the king and the princes* that are, and set up whom he pleaseth.

4. Yet the destruction of Elam shall not be perpetual, *ver.* 39. *In the latter days I will bring again the captivity of Elam.* When Cyrus had destroyed Babylon, brought the empire into the hands of the Persians, the Elamites, no doubt, returned in triumph, out of all the countries whither they were scattered, and settled again in their own country. But this promise was to have its full and principal accomplishment in the days of the Messiah, when we find Elamites particularly among those, who, when the holy Ghost was given, heard spoken *in their own tongues the wonderful works of God*, Acts ii. 9. and that is the most desirable return of the captivity. *If the Son make you free, then you shall be free indeed.*

CHAP. L.

In this chapter, and that which follows, we have the judgment of Babylon, which is put last of Jeremiah's prophecies against the Gentiles, because it was last accomplished; and when the cup of God's fury went round, chap. xxv. 17. *the king of Sheshach*, i. e. *Babylon, drunk last. Babylon was employed as the rod in God's hand for the chastising of all the other nations, and now at length that rod shall be thrown into the fire. The destruction of Babylon by Cyrus was foretold long before it came to its height by Isaiah, and now again when it is come to its height by Jeremiah; for though at this time he saw that kingdom flourishing* like a green bay-tree, *yet at the same time he foresaw it withered and cut down. And as Isaiah's prophecies of the destruction of Babylon, and the deliverance of Israel out of it, seem designed to typify the evangelical triumphs of all believers over the powers of darkness, and in the great salvation wrought out by our Lord Jesus Christ; so Jeremiah's prophecies of the same events seem designed to point at the apocalyptick triumphs of the gospel church in the latter days over the New Testament Babylon, many passages in the Revelation being borrowed from hence. The kingdom of Babylon being much larger and stronger than any other of the kingdoms here prophesied against, its fall was the more considerable in it self; and it having been more oppressive to the people of God than any of the other, and therefore the prophet is very large upon this subject, for the comfort of the captives; and what was foretold in general often before,* chap. xxv. 12. *and,* xxvii. 7. *is here more particularly described, and with a great deal of prophetick heat as well as light. The terrible judgments God had in store for Babylon, and the glorious blessings he had in store for his people, that were captives there, are intermixed and counterchanged in the prophecy of this chapter; for therefore Babylon was destroyed, to make way for the turning again of the captivity of God's people. Here is,* 1. *The rule*

ruin of Babylon, ver. 1,—3. *and again*, ver. 9,—16. *and again*, ver. 21,—32. *and again*, ver. 35,—46. 2. *The redemption of God's people*, ver. 4,—8. *and again*, ver. 17,—20. *and again*, ver. 33, 34. *And these being set the one against the other, it is easy to say which one would choose to take one's lot with, the persecuting Babylonians, that, though now in pomp, are reserved for so great a ruin; or the persecuted Israelites, that, though now in thraldom, are reserved for so great a glory.*

1. THE word that the LORD spake against Babylon, *and* against the land of the Chaldeans by Jeremiah the prophet. 2. Declare ye among the nations, and publish, and set up a standard, publish *and* conceal not: say, Babylon is taken, Bel is confounded, Merodach is broken in pieces, her idols are confounded, her images are broken in pieces. 3. For out of the north there cometh up a nation against her, which shall make her land desolate, and none shall dwell therein: they shall remove, they shall depart both man and beast. 4. ¶ In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping: they shall go, and seek the LORD their God. 5. They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, *saying*, Come, and let us join our selves to the LORD, in a perpetual covenant *that* shall not be forgotten. 6. My people hath been lost sheep: their shepherds have caused them to go astray, they have turned them away *on* the mountains: they have gone from mountain to hill, they have forgotten their resting-place. 7. All they that found them have devoured them, and their adversaries said, We offend not, because they have sinned against the LORD, the habitation of justice, even the LORD, the hope of their fathers. 8. Remove out of the midst of Babylon, and go forth out of the land of the Chaldeans, and be as the he-goats before the flocks.

Here is, 1. A word spoken against Babylon, by him whose works all agree with his word, and none of whose words fall to the ground. The king of Babylon had been very kind to Jeremiah, and yet he must foretel the ruin of that kingdom; for God's prophets must not be governed by favour or affection. Whoever are our friends, if notwithstanding they are God's enemies, we dare not speak peace to them.

(1.) The destruction of Babylon is here spoken of, as a thing done, *ver.* 2. Let it be published to the nations as a piece of news, true news, and great news, and news they are all concerned in; let them hang out the flag, as is usual, on days of triumph, to give notice of it; let all the world take notice of it, *Babylon is taken*, let God have the honour nf it, let his people have the comfort of it, and therefore do not conceal it. Take care that it be known, that *the Lord may be known by those judgments which he executeth*, Psal. ix. 16.

(2.) It is spoken of as a thing done throughly. For, 1. The very idols of Babylon, which the people would protect with all possible care, and from which they expected protection, shall be destroyed. Bel and Merodach were their two principal deities, they shall be *confounded*, and the images of them *broken to pieces*. 2. The country shall be laid waste, *ver.* 3. out *of the north*; from Medea, which lay north of Babylon, and from Assyria, through which Cyrus made his descent upon Babylon; from thence the nation shall come that shall make *her land desolate*. Their land was north to the countries that they destroyed, who were therefore threatned with evil from the north (*omne malum ab aquilone:*) but God will find out nations, yet further north, to come upon them. The pomp and power of old Rome was brought down by northern nations, the Goths and Vandals.

2. Here is a word spoken for the people of God, and for their comfort, both *the children of Israel* and *of Judah*; for many there were of the ten tribes that associated with those of the two tribes in their return out of Babylon. Now here,

(1.) It is promised, that they shall return to their God first, and then to their own land; and the promise of their conversion and reformation is that which makes way for all the other promises, *ver.* 4, 5. 1. They shall *lament after the Lord*, as the whole house of Israel did in Samuel's time, 1 *Sam.* vii. 2. they shall *go weeping*. These tears flow not from the sorrow of the world, as those when they went into captivity, but from godly sorrow; they are tears of repentance for sin, tears of joy for the goodness of God, in the dawning of the day of their deliverance, which, for ought appears, doth more towards the bringing of them to mourn for sin, than all the calamities of their captivity; that prevails to *lead them to repentance*, when the other did not prevail to drive them to it. Note, It is a good sign God is coming towards a people in ways of mercy, when they begin to be tenderly affected under his hand. 2. They shall *enquire after the Lord*, they shall not sink under their sorrows, but bestir themselves to find out comfort where it is to be had; *They shall go weeping to seek the Lord their God.* Those that seek the Lord must *seek him sorrowing*, as Christ's parents sought him, *Luke* ii. 48. And those that sorrow must seek the Lord, and then their sorrow shall soon be turned into joy, for he will be found of those that so seek him. They shall *seek the Lord as their God*, and shall now have no more to do with idols. When they shall hear that the idols of Babylon are *confounded and broken*, it will be seasonable for them to enquire after their own God, and return to him who lives for ever. Therefore men are deceived in false gods, that they may depend on the true God only. 2. They shall think of returning to their own country again, shall think of it not only as a mercy, but as a duty, because there only is the *holy hill of Zion*, on which once stood *the house of the Lord their God*, ver. 5. *They shall ask the way to Zion, with their faces thitherwards:* Zion was the city of their solemnities, they often thought of it in the depth of their captivity, *Psal.* cxxxvii. 1. but now the ruin of Babylon gave them some hopes of a release, they talk of nothing else but of going back to Zion. Their hearts were upon it before, and now they *set their faces thitherwards*; they long to be there, they set out for Zion, and resolve not to take up short: the journey is long, they know not the road, but they shall *ask the way*, for they will press forward till they come to Zion; and as they are determined not to turn back, so they are in care not to miss the way. This represents the return of poor souls to God: heaven is the Zion they aim at as their end, on this they have set their hearts, towards this they have *set their faces*, and therefore *ask the way* thither. Not ask the way to heaven, and set their faces towards the world; nor set their faces towards heaven, and go on at a venture without asking the way. But in all true converts there is both a sincere desire to attain the end, and a constant care to keep in the way; and a blessed sight it is, to see people thus asking the way to heaven with their faces thitherward. 4. They shall renew their covenants with God of closer walking for the future; *Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant.* They had broken covenant with God, had, in effect, separated themselves from him, but now they resolve to *join themselves* to him again, by engaging themselves afresh to be his. Thus when backsliders return, they must *do their first works*, must renew the covenant they first made; and it must be a *perpetual covenant* that must never be broken; and in order to that must never be forgotten; for a due remembrance of it will be the means of a due observance of it.

(2.) Their present case is lamented as very sad, and as having been long so; *My people* (for he owns them as his now they are returning to him) *hath been lost sheep*, ver. 6. they have *gone from mountain to hill*, have been hurried from place to place, and could find no pasture, *they have forgotten their resting place* in their own country, and cannot find their way to it. And that which aggravated their misery was, 1. That they were *led astray by their own shepherds*, their own princes and priests; they turned them from their duty, and so provoked God to turn them out of their own land. It is ill with a people when their leaders cause them to err, when those that should direct and reform them, seduce and debauch them; and when those that should secure and advance their interests are the betrayers of them. 2. That in their wandrings they lay exposed to the beasts of prey, who thought they were entitled to them, as waifs and strays that have no owner; *ver.* 7. it is with them as with wandring sheep, *all that found them have devoured them*, and made a prey of them; and when they did them the greatest injuries they laughed at them, telling them it was what their own prophets had many a time told them they deserved: that was far from justifying those who did them wrong, yet they bantered them with this excuse, *We offend not, because they have sinned against the Lord*, but they could not pretend they had sinned against them. And see what notion they had of the Lord they had sinned against, not as the only true and living God, but only as *the habitation of justice*, and *the hope of their fathers*; they had put a contempt upon the temple, and upon the tradition of their ancestors, and therefore deserved to suffer these hard things. And yet it was indeed an aggravation of their sin, and justified God, though it did not justify their adversaries in what was done to them, that they had *forsaken the habitation of justice*, and him that was *the hope of their fathers*.

(3.) They are called upon to hasten away, as soon as ever the door of liberty was opened to them, *ver.* 8. *Remove* not only out of the borders, but *out of the midst of Babylon*; though you be never so well seated there, think not to settle there, but hasten to Zion, and *be as the he-goats before the flocks*, i. e. strive which shall be foremost which shall lead in so good a work: a he-goat is therefore *comely in going*, Prov. xxx. 31. because he goes first. It is a graceful thing to be forward in a good work, and to set others a good example.

9. ¶ For lo, I will raise and cause to come up against Babylon, an assembly of great nations from the north-country, and they shall set themselves in aray against her, from thence she shall be taken: their arrows *shall be* as of a mighty expert man; none shall return in vain.

10. An

10. And Chaldea ſhall be a ſpoil: all that ſpoil her ſhall be ſatisfied, ſaith the LORD. 11. Becauſe ye were glad, becauſe ye rejoiced, O ye deſtroyers of mine heritage, becauſe ye are grown fat, as the heifer at graſs, and bellow as bulls. 12. Your mother ſhall be ſore confounded, ſhe that bare you ſhall be aſhamed: behold, the hindermoſt of the nations *ſhall be* a wilderneſs, a dry land and a deſert. 13. Becauſe of the wrath of the LORD, it ſhall not be inhabited, but it ſhall be wholly deſolate: every one that goeth by Babylon ſhall be aſtoniſhed, and hiſs at all her plagues. 14. Put your ſelves in aray againſt Babylon round about: all ye that bend the bow, ſhoot at her, ſpare no arrows, for ſhe hath ſinned againſt the LORD. 15. Shout againſt her round about: ſhe hath given her hand: her foundations are fallen, her walls are thrown down; for it *is* the vengeance of the LORD: take vengeance upon her; as ſhe hath done, do unto her. 16. Cut off the ſower from Babylon, and him that handleth the ſickle in the time of harveſt: for fear of the oppreſſing ſword, they ſhall turn every one to his people, and they ſhall flee every one to his own land. 17. ¶ Iſrael *is* a ſcattered ſheep, the lions have driven *him* away: firſt the king of Aſſyria hath devoured him, and laſt this Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon hath broken his bones. 18. Therefore thus ſaith the LORD of hoſts the God of Iſrael, Behold, I will puniſh the king of Babylon and his land, as I have puniſhed the king of Aſſyria. 19. And I will bring Iſrael again to his habitation, and he ſhall feed on Carmel and Baſhan, and his ſoul ſhall be ſatisfied upon mount Ephraim and Gilead. 20. In thoſe days, and in that time, ſaith the LORD, the iniquity of Iſrael ſhall be ſought for, and *there ſhall be* none; and the ſins of Judah, and they ſhall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reſerve.

God is here, by his prophet, as afterwards, in his providence, proceeding in his controverſy with Babylon. Obſerve,

1. The commiſſion and charge given to the inſtruments that were to be employed in deſtroying Babylon: The army that is to do it is called *an aſſembly of great nations*, ver. 9. the Medes and Perſians, and all their allies and auxiliaries; it is called *an aſſembly*, becauſe regularly formed by the divine will and counſel to do this execution: God will *raiſe them up* to do it, will incline them to, and fit them for, this ſervice, and then he will *cauſe them to come up*, for all their motions are under his conduct and direction: he ſhall give the word of command, ſhall order them to *put themſelves in aray againſt Babylon*, ver. 14. and then *they ſhall put themſelves in aray*, ver. 9. for what God appoints to be done ſhall be done; and *from thence* preſently *ſhe ſhall be taken*, from their firſt ſitting down before it they ſhall be ſtill gaining ground againſt it till it be taken. God ſhall bid them *ſhoot at her, and ſpare no arrows*, ver. 14. and then *their arrows ſhall be as of a mighty expert man*, that has both skill and ſtrength, a good eye and a good hand, *ver.* 9. *None ſhall return in vain.* When God gives commiſſion he will give ſucceſs. Nay, they are bidden not only to *ſhoot at her*, ver. 14. but *ſhout againſt her*, ver. 15. with a triumphant ſhout, as thoſe that are already ſure of victory. Thoſe whom God directs to *ſhoot*, may do it with *ſhouting*, for they are ſure not to miſs the mark.

2. The deſolation and deſtruction it ſelf that ſhall be brought upon Babylon: This is ſet forth here in a great variety of expreſſions, (1.) The wealth of Babylon ſhall be a rich and eaſy prey to the conquerors, *ver.* 10. *Chaldea ſhall be a ſpoil* to all her deſtroyers, who ſhall enrich themſelves by plundering her, and, which is ſtrange, *all that ſpoil her ſhall be ſatisfied*; they ſhall have ſo much, that even they themſelves ſhall ſay they have enough. (2.) The country of Babylon ſhall be diſpeopled and lie uninhabited; *it ſhall be wholly deſolate*, ver. 13. to that degree, that *every one that goeth by* ſhall triumph in her fall, and, inſtead of condoling them ſhall *hiſs at all her plagues*, ver. 13. (3.) Their anceſtors ſhall be aſhamed of their cowardiſe, in fleeing from the firſt onſet, *ver.* 12. or, *your mother*, i. e. Babylon itſelf, the mother city, *ſhall be confounded*, when ſhe ſees herſelf deſerted by thoſe that ſhould have been her guards. Thus the firſt ages of chriſtians may juſtly be confounded and aſhamed, to ſee how unlike them the latter ages are, and how wretchedly they have degenerated; and no ſin brings a ſurer and ſorer ruin upon perſons or people than apoſtaſy. (4.) The great admirers of Babylon ſhall ſee it rendered very deſpicable: the laſt of kingdoms, the very tail of the nations *ſhall it be, a wilderneſs, a dry land, a deſert*, ver. 12. The country that was populous ſhall be diſpeopled, that was enriched with a fertile ſoil ſhall become barren. (5.) The great city, the head of it, ſhall be quite ruined, *her foundations are fallen*, and therefore *her walls are thrown down*, for how can the walls ſtand, when divine vengeance is at the door, and ſhakes the very foundations? It is the vengeance of the Lord, which nothing can contend with either in law or battle. (6.) There ſhall not be left in Babylon ſo much as *the poor of the land for vinedreſſers and huſbandmen*, as there was in Iſrael; *ver.* 16. *The ſower ſhall be cut off from Babylon, and him that handleth the ſickle*; the country ſhall be ſo emptied of people, that there ſhall be none to till the ground, and gather in the fruits of it. Harveſt ſhall come, and there ſhall be no reapers; ſeedneſs ſhall come, but there ſhall be no ſower; God will do his part, but there ſhall be no men to do theirs. (7.) All their auxiliary forces, which they have hired into their ſervice, ſhall deſert them, as mercenary men often do upon the approach of danger, *ver.* 16. *for fear of the oppreſſing ſword they ſhall turn every one to his people.* This was threatned before concerning Egypt, *chap.* xlvi. 16.

3. The procuring, provoking cauſe of this deſtruction. It comes from God's diſpleaſure: it is *becauſe of the wrath of the Lord* that Babylon *ſhall be wholly deſolate*, ver. 13. and his wrath is righteous, for, *ver.* 14. *ſhe hath ſinned againſt the Lord*, therefore *ſpare no arrows.* Note, It is ſin that makes men a mark for the arrows of God's judgments. A great deal of idolatry and immorality were to be found in Babylon, yet thoſe are not mentioned as the reaſon of God's diſpleaſure againſt them, but the injuries they had done to the people of God, from a principle of enmity to them as his people. They have been *the deſtroyers of God's heritage*, ver. 11. herein indeed God made uſe of them for the neceſſary correction of his people; and yet it is laid to their charge as a heinous crime, becauſe they deſigned nothing but their utter deſtruction. (1.) What they did againſt Jeruſalem they did with pleaſure, *ver.* 11. *ye were glad, ye rejoiced.* God doth not afflict his people willingly, and therefore takes it very ill if the inſtruments he employs afflict them willingly. When Titus Veſpaſian deſtroyed Jeruſalem he wept over it, but theſe Chaldeans triumphed over it. (2.) The ſpoils of Jeruſalem they made uſe of to feed their own luxury; *Ye are grown fat as the heifer at graſs, and bellow as bulls:* your having conquered Jeruſalem has made you very wanton and proud, eaſy to yourſelves and formidable to all about you, and therefore you muſt *be a ſpoil.* They that have thus ſwallowed down riches muſt vomit them up again. Therefore they have *given their hand*, ver. 15. i. e. they have ſurrendred themſelves to the conqueror, have tamely yielded, ſo that now you may *take vengeance on her*, now you may make repriſals, and *do unto her as ſhe hath done.* (3.) They aimed at nothing leſs than the utter ruin of God's Iſrael; *Iſrael is a ſcattered ſheep*, as before, *ver.* 6. that is not only barked at and worried by dogs, but even lions, the moſt potent adverſaries have roared upon him and *driven him away*, ver. 17. One king of Aſſyria carried the ten tribes quite away, and devoured them; another invaded Judah, and plundered and impoveriſhed it, tore the fleece and fleſh of this poor ſheep; and now at laſt this Nebuchadnezzar, that is the terror and plague of all his neighbours, has taken advantage of the low condition to which he is reduced, and he has fallen upon him and *broken his bones*, has quite ruined him, has unboned him, and therefore the king of Babylon muſt be puniſhed as the king of Aſſyria was, *ver.* 18. Note, Thoſe who purſue and proſecute the ſins of their predeceſſors, muſt expect to be purſued and proſecuted by their plagues; if they do as they did, let them fare as they fared.

4. The mercy promiſed to the *Iſrael of God*, which ſhall not only accompany, but accrue from the deſtruction of Babylon. (1.) God will return their captivity, they ſhall be releaſed out of their bondage, and *brought again to their own habitation*, as ſheep that were ſcattered, to their own fold, *ver.* 19. They ſtill retained a title to the land of Canaan, it is their habitation ſtill, the diſcontinuance of their poſſeſſion was not the deſtruction of their right, but now they ſhall recover the enjoyment of it again. (2.) He will reſtore their proſperity; they ſhall not only live, but live comfortably in their own land again; they ſhall *feed upon Carmel and Baſhan*, the richeſt and moſt fruitful parts of the country: Theſe ſheep ſhall be gathered from the deſerts to which they were diſperſed, and put again into good paſture, which their ſoul ſhall be ſatisfied with; though they ſhall come hungry to it, having been ſo long ſtinted and ſtraitned, and kept ſhort, yet they ſhall have enough to ſatiate them, and ſhall have hearts to be ſatiated with it. They *enquired the way to Zion*, ver. 5. where God was to be ſerved and worſhipped, that was it they chiefly aimed at in their return; but God will not only bring them thither, but bring them alſo to Carmel and Baſhan, where they ſhall abundantly feed themſelves. Note, They that return to God and their duty, ſhall find true ſatisfaction of ſoul in ſo doing; and they that *ſeek firſt the kingdom of God and the righteouſneſs thereof*, that aim to make their habitation in Zion, the holy hill, *other things ſhall be added to them*, even all the comforts of *Ephraim and Gilead*, the fruitful hills. (3.) God will pardon their iniquity; this is the root of all the reſt, *ver.* 20, *In thoſe days the iniquity of Iſrael ſhall be ſought for, and there ſhall be none.* Not only the puniſhments of their iniquity ſhall be taken off, but the offence which it gave to God ſhall be forgotten, and he will be reconciled to them. Their ſin ſhall be before him as if it had never been, it ſhall be blotted out as a cloud, croſſed out as a debt, ſhall be caſt behind his back; nay, it ſhall be caſt into the depth of the ſea, ſhall be no longer ſealed up among God's treaſures, nor in any danger of appearing again, or

rising up against them. This notes how fully God forgives sin, he *remembers it no more*. Note, Deliverances out of trouble are then comforts indeed, when they are the fruits of forgiveness of sin, *Isa.* xxxviii. 17. Judah and Israel were so fully forgiven when they were brought back out of Babylon that they are said to have *received of the Lord's hand double for all their sins*, Isa. xl. 2. this may include also a thorough reformation of their hearts and lives, as well as a full remission of their sins. If any seek for idols or any idolatrous customs among them, after their return, *there shall be none*, they *shall not find them*; their dross shall be purely purged away, and by that it shall appear that their guilt is so; *for I will pardon them whom I reserve, I will be propitious to them*, so the word is; and that must be through him who is the *Great Propitiation*. Note, Those whose sins God pardons, he reserves for something very great; for whom he *justifies*, them he *glorifies*.

21. ¶ Go up against the land of Merathaim, *even* against it, and against the inhabitants of Pekod: waste and utterly destroy after them, saith the LORD, and do according to all that I have commanded thee. 22. A sound of battle *is* in the land, and of great destruction. 23. How is the hammer of the whole earth cut asunder and broken? how is Babylon become a desolation among the nations? 24. I have laid a snare for thee, and thou art also taken, O Babylon, and thou wast not aware: thou art found, and also caught, because thou hast striven against the LORD. 25. The LORD hath opened his armoury, and hath brought forth the weapons of his indignation: for this *is* the work of the LORD God of hosts, in the land of the Chaldeans. 26. Come against her from the utmost border, open her store-houses: cast her up as heaps, and destroy her utterly: let nothing of her be left. 27. Slay all her bullocks: let them go down to the slaughter: wo unto them, for their day is come, the time of their visitation. 28. The voice of them that flee, and escape out of the land of Babylon, to declare in Zion the vengeance of the LORD our God, the vengeance of his temple. 29. Call together the archers against Babylon: all ye that bend the bow, camp against it round about; let none thereof escape: recompense her according to her work; according to all that she hath done, do unto her: for she hath been proud against the LORD, against the holy One of Israel. 30. Therefore shall her young men fall in the streets, and all her men of war shall be cut off in that day, saith the LORD. 31. Behold, I *am* against thee, *O thou* most proud, saith the LORD God of hosts: for thy day is come, the time *that* I will visit thee. 32. And the most proud shall stumble and fall, and none shall raise him up: and I will kindle a fire in his cities, and it shall devour all round about him.

Here, 1. The forces are mustered and commissioned to destroy Babylon, and every thing got ready for a descent upon that potent kingdom. *Go up against* that *land* by *Merathaim*, i. e. the country of the Mardi, that lay part in Assyria, and part in Armenia, and go among *the inhabitants of Pekod*, another country, mentioned, *Ezek.* xxiii. 23. which Cyrus took in his way to Babylon: The forces of Cyrus are called to go up against Babylon, *ver.* 21. to *come against her from the utmost border*: Let all come together, for there will be both work and pay enough for them all, *ver.* 26. Distance of place must not be their hindrance from engaging in this work; *the archers* particularly must be *called together against Babylon*, ver. 29. Thus *the Lord hath opened his armoury*, ver. 25. *his treasury*, so the word is; *and hath brought forth the weapons of his indignation*; as great princes fetch out of their magazines and stores all necessary provisions for their armies, when they undertake any great expedition. Media and Persia are now God's armoury, thence he fetcheth the weapons of his wrath, Cyrus, and his great officers and armies, whom he will make use of for the destruction of Babylon. Note, Great men are but instruments which the great God makes use of to serve his own purposes. He hath variety of instruments, hath them at command, hath armouries ready to be opened according as the occasion is. *This is the work of the Lord God of hosts.* Note, When God hath work to do, he will make it appear that he is *God of hosts*, and will not want instruments to do it with.

2. Instructions are given them what to do. In general, *Do according to all that I have commanded thee*, ver. 21. It was said of Cyrus, *Isa.* xliv. 28. *He shall perform all my pleasure*, in his expedition against Babylon. They must *waste and utterly destroy after them*; when they have destroyed once they must go over them again; or, destroy their posterity that should come after them. They must *open her store-houses*, ver. 26. rifle her treasures, and turn her artillery against her self; they must *cast her up as heaps*; let all the wealth and pomp of Babylon be shovelled up in a heap of ruins and rubbish: *Tread her down as heaps*, so the margin reads it; *and destroy her utterly*. See how little account the great God makes of those things, which men so much value, and value themselves by! Their princes and great men, that are fat and bulky, shall fall by the sword, not as men of war, in the field of battle, which we call a bed of honour, but as beasts by the butcher's hand, *ver.* 27. *Slay all her bullocks*, all her mighty men, *let them go down* sottishly and insensibly, as an ox *to the slaughter: Wo unto them*, their case is the more sad, for the little sense they have of it; *their day is come* to fall, *the time* when they must be reckoned with, and they are not aware of it.

3. Assurances are given them of success. Let them do what God commands, and they shall accomplish what he threatens. A *great destruction* shall be made, *ver.* 22. *Babylon* shall *become a desolation*, ver. 23. *her young men, and all her men of war, shall be cut off in that day*, that should have been her defence, *ver.* 30. God is *against* her, *ver.* 31. he hath *laid a snare for* her, *ver.* 24. he hath formed this enterprize against her, that she should be surprized as a bird taken in a snare. Cyrus shall, no doubt, prevail, for he fights under God; God *will kindle a fire* in the cities of Babylon, *ver.* 32. and who can stand before him when he is angry? or quench the fire that he has kindled?

4. Reasons are given for these severe dealings with Babylon. They that are employed in this war may, if they please, know the grounds of it, and be satisfied in the justice of it, which it is fit all should be that are called to such work. 1. Babylon has been very troublesome, vexatious and injurious to all its neighbours; *it has been the hammer of the whole earth*, ver. 23. beating, beating down, and beating to pieces, all the nations far and near. It has done so long enough, it is time now that it be *cut asunder and broken*. Note, He that is the God of nations will sooner or later assert the injured rights of nations against those that unjustly and violently invade them. The God of the whole earth will break *the hammer of the whole earth*. 2. Babylon has bid defiance to God himself: *Thou hast striven against the Lord*, ver. 24. *hast joined issue with him*, (so the word signifies) as in law or battle, hast openly opposed him, set up rivals with him, raised rebellion against him, therefore *thou art* now *found and caught*, as in a snare. Note, Those that strive against the Lord, will soon find themselves over-matched. 3. Babylon ruined Jerusalem, the holy city, and the holy house there, and must now be called to an account for that. This is the manifesto published in Zion, in the day of Babylon's visitation; it is *the vengeance of the Lord our God, the vengeance of his temple*, ver. 28. The burning of the temple, and carrying away the vessels of that, was an article in the charge against Babylon, on which greater stress was laid, than upon its being *the hammer of the whole earth*; for Zion was *the joy* and glory *of the whole earth*. Note, Whatever wrong is done to God's church, his temple in the world, it will certainly be reckoned for; and no vengeance will be sorer and heavier than *the vengeance of the temple*. 5. Babylon had been very haughty and insolent, and therefore must have a fall, for it is the glory of God to *look upon those that are proud, and to abase them*, Job xl. 12. *I am against thee, O thou most proud*, ver. 31. *Thou pride*, so the word is; and again, *ver.* 32. as proud as pride it self. Note, The pride of mens hearts sets God against them, and ripens them apace for ruin; for God *resists the proud*, and will bring them down: *The most proud shall stumble and fall*; they shall fall not so much by others thrusting them down, as by their own stumbling; for they hold their heads so high, that they never look under their feet, to choose their way, and avoid stumbling blocks, but walk at all adventures. Babylon's pride must unavoidably be her ruin; for *she has been proud against the Lord, against the holy One of Israel*, ver. 29. has insulted him in insulting over his people; she has made him her enemy, and therefore, when she is *fallen, none shall raise her up*, ver. 32. Who can help those up, whom God will throw down?

33. ¶ Thus saith the LORD of hosts, The children of Israel and the children of Judah *were* oppressed together, and all that took them captives held them fast, they refused to let them go. 34. Their redeemer *is* strong, the LORD of hosts *is* his name, he shall throughly plead their cause, that he may give rest to the land, and disquiet the inhabitants of Babylon. 35. ¶ A sword *is* upon the Chaldeans, saith the LORD, and upon the inhabitants of Babylon, and upon her princes, and upon her wise *men*. 36. A sword *is* upon the liars, and they shall dote, a sword *is* upon her mighty men, and they shall be dismayed. 37. A sword *is* upon their horses, and upon their chariots, and upon all the mingled people that *are* in the midst of her, and they shall become as women: a sword *is* upon her treasures, and they shall be robbed. 38. A drought *is* upon her waters, and they shall be dried up: for it *is* the

the land of graven images, and they are mad upon *their* idols. 39. Therefore the wild beasts of the desert, with the wild beasts of the islands, shall dwell *there*, and the owls shall dwell therein: and it shall be no more inhabited for ever: neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation. 40. As God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and the neighbour *cities* thereof, saith the LORD: *so* shall no man abide there, neither shall any son of man dwell therein. 41. Behold, a people shall come from the north, and a great nation, and many kings shall be raised up from the coasts of the earth. 42. They shall hold the bow and the lance: they *are* cruel, and will not shew mercy: their voice shall rore like the sea, and they shall ride upon horses, *every one* put in aray like a man to the battle, against thee, O daughter of Babylon. 43. The king of Babylon hath heard the report of them, and his hands waxed feeble: anguish took hold of him, *and* pangs as of a woman in travail. 44. Behold, he shall come up like a lion from the swelling of Jordan, unto the habitation of the strong: but I will make them suddenly run away from her: and who *is* a chosen *man that* I may appoint over her? for who *is* like me, and who will appoint me the time? and who *is* that shepherd that will stand before me? 45. Therefore hear ye the counsel of the LORD, that he hath taken against Babylon, and his purposes that he hath purposed against the land of the Chaldeans: surely the least of the flock shall draw them out: surely he shall make *their* habitation desolate with them. 46. At the noise of the taking of Babylon the earth is moved, and the cry is heard among the nations.

We have in these verses,

1. Israel's sufferings, and their deliverance out of those sufferings: God takes notice of the bondage of his people in Babylon, as he did of their bondage in Egypt, he hath *surely seen* it, and has *heard their cry*. *Israel and Judah were oppressed together*, ver. 33. Those that remained of the captives of the ten tribes, upon the uniting of the kingdoms of Assyria and Chaldea, seemed to have come and mingled themselves with those of the two tribes, and to have mingled tears with them, so that they were *oppressed together*. They were humble supplicants for their liberty, and that was all; they could not attempt any thing towards it, for *all that took them captives held them fast*, and were quite too hard for them. But this is their comfort in distress, that, though they are weak, *their redeemer is strong*, ver. 34. *their avenger*, so the word signifies; that has a right to them, and will claim his right, and make good his claim; he is stronger than their enemies, that *hold them fast*; he can overpower all the force that is against them, and put strength into his own people, though they are very weak. *The Lord of hosts is his name*, and he will answer his name, and make it to appear that he is what his people call him, and will be that to them for which they depend upon him. Note, It is the unspeakable comfort of the people of God, that, though they have hosts against them, they have *the Lord of hosts* for them; and *he shall thoroughly plead their cause*, pleading he shall plead it, plead it with jealousy, plead it effectually, plead it and carry it, *that he may give rest to the land*, to his peoples land, rest from all their enemies round about. This is applicable to all believers, that complain of the dominion of sin, and corruption, and of their own weakness and manifold infirmities, let them know that *their redeemer is strong*, he is able to keep what they commit to him, and he will plead their cause, sin shall not have dominion over them; he will *make them free*, and they shall be *free indeed*; he will *give* them *rest*, that *rest which remains for the people of God*.

2. Babylon's sin, and their punishment for that sin.

(1.) The sins they are here charged with are idolatry and persecution. 1. They oppressed the people of God, they *held them fast*, and would not *let them go*; they *opened not the house of his prisoners*, Isa. xiv. 17. This was God's quarrel with them, as of old with Pharaoh, it cost him dear, and yet they would not take warning. Therefore *the inhabitants of Babylon* must be *disquieted*, ver. 34. because they have disquieted God's people, whose honour and comfort he is jealous for, and therefore will *recompense tribulation to those that trouble them*, as well as rest to them *that are troubled*, 2 Thess. i. 6, 7. 2. They wronged God himself, and robbed him, giving that glory to others, which is due to him alone; for, *ver.* 38. *it is the land of graven images*, all parts of the country abounded with idols, and they were mad upon them, were in love with them, and doted on them, cared not what cost and pains they were at in the worship of them, were unwearied in paying their respects to them, and in all this they were wretchedly infatuated, and acted like men out of their wits; they were carried on in their idolatry without reason or discretion, like men in a perfect fury. The word here used for idols properly signifies *terrors*, *Enim*, the name given to giants that were formidable, because they made the images of their gods to look frightful, to strike a terror upon fools and children: Their idols were scarecrows, yet they doted on them. Babylon was *the mother of harlots*, Rev. xvii. 5. the source of idolatry. Note, It is the maddest thing in the world to make a god of any creature; and those who are proud against the Lord, the true God, are justly given up to strong delusions, to be mad upon idols, that cannot profit: But this madness is wickedness, for which sinners will be certainly and severely reckoned with.

(2.) The judgments of God upon them for these sins, are such as will quite lay them waste, and ruin them.

1. All that should be their defence and support shall be cut off by the sword. The Chaldeans had long been God's sword, wherewith he had done execution upon the sinful nations round about, but now, they being as bad as any of them, or worse, a sword is brought upon them, even *upon the inhabitants of Babylon*, ver. 35. a sword of war; and as it is in God's hand, sent and directed by him, it is a sword of justice. It shall be, 1. *Upon* their *princes*, they shall fall by it, and their dignity, wealth and power shall not secure them. 2. *Upon* their *wise men*, their philosophers, their statesmen, and privy-counsellors; their learning and policy shall neither secure themselves, nor stand the publick in any stead. 3. *Upon* their soothsayers and astrologers, here called the *liars*, ver. 36. for they cheated with their prognostications of peace and prosperity; the sword upon them shall make them dote, so that they shall talk like fools, and be as men that had lost all their wits. Note, God has a sword that can reach the soul, and affect the mind, and bring men under spiritual plagues. 4. *Upon* their *mighty men*, a sword shall be upon their spirits, if they are not slain, yet *they shall be dismayed*, and shall be no longer *mighty men*; for what stead will their hands stand them in, when their hearts fail them? 5. Upon their militia, *ver.* 37. the *sword* shall be *upon their horses and chariots*, the invaders shall make themselves masters of all their warlike stores, shall seize *their horses and chariots* for themselves, or destroy them. The troops of other nations, that were in their service, shall be quite disheartned, *the mingled people shall become as* weak and timorous as *women*. 6. Upon their exchequer, the *sword* shall be *upon her treasures*, which are the sinews of war, *and they shall be robbed*, and made use of by the enemy against them. See what universal destruction the sword makes when it comes with commission!

2. The country shall be made desolate, *ver.* 38. *the waters shall be dried up*; the water that secures the city. Cyrus drew the river Euphrates into so many chanels as made it passable for his army, so that they got with ease to the walls of Babylon, which were thought to be, by that river, inaccessible. The water likewise that makes the country fruitful should *be dried up*, so that it shall be turned into barrenness, and shall be no more inhabited by the children of men, but by *the wild beasts of the desert*, ver. 39. This was foretold concerning Babylon, *Isa.* xiii. 19,—22. It shall become like *Sodom and Gomorrah*, ver. 40. The same was foretold concerning Edom, *chap.* xlix. 18. As the Chaldeans had laid Edom waste, so they shall themselves be laid waste.

3. The king and kingdom shall be put into the utmost confusion and consternation by the enemies invading of them, *ver.* 41, 42, 43. All the expressions here used speaking the formidable power of the invaders, the terrors wherewith they should aray themselves, and the mighty fright which both court and country should be put into thereby, we met with before, *chap.* vi. 22, 23, 24. concerning the Chaldeans invading the land of Judah. The battle which is there said to be *against thee, O daughter of Zion*, is here said to be *against thee, O daughter of Babylon*, to intimate, that they should be paid in their own coin. Those that are for terror and destruction to others, God can find out such as shall be for terror and destruction to them. And those who have dealt cruelly, and have shewed no mercy, may expect to be cruelly dealt with, and to find no mercy. Only there is one difference between these passages, there it is said, *we have heard the fame thereof, and our hands wax feeble*, &c. here it is said, *the king of Babylon has heard the report, and his hands waxed feeble*; which intimates, that that proud and daring prince shall, in the day of his distress, be as weak and dispirited as the meanest Israelites were in the day of their distress.

4. That they shall be as ill hurt as frightened, for the invader shall *come up like a lion*, to tear and destroy, *ver.* 44. and shall make them and their *habitation desolate*, ver. 45. and the desolation shall be so astonishing, that all the nations about shall be terrified by it, *ver.* 46. These three verses we had before, *chap.* xlix. 19, 20, 21. in the prophecy of the destruction of Edom, which was accomplished by the Chaldeans, and they are here repeated, *mutatis mutandis*, in the prophecy of the destruction of Babylon, which was to be accomplished upon the Chaldeans, to shew, that though the distributions of providence may appear unequal for a time, its retributions will be equal at last; when thou shalt make *an end to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled*, Isa. xxxiii. 1. Rev. xiii. 10.

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The prophet, in this chapter, goes on with the prediction of Babylon's fall, to which other prophets also bare witness. He is very large and lively in describing the foresight God had given him of it, for the encouragement of the pious captives, whose deliverance depended upon it, and was to be the result of it. Here is, 1. *The record of Babylon's doom, with the particulars of it, intermixed with the grounds of God's controversy with her, many aggravations of her fall, and great encouragements given from thence to the Israel of God, that suffered such hard things by her,* ver. 1,—58. 2. *The representation and ratification of this, by the throwing of a copy of this prophecy into the river Euphrates,* ver. 59,—64.

1. THUS saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up against Babylon, and against them that dwell in the midst of them that rise up against me, a destroying wind; 2. And will send unto Babylon fanners, that shall fan her, and shall empty her land: for in the day of trouble they shall be against her round about. 3. Against *him that* bendeth let the archer bend his bow, and against *him that* lifteth himself up in his brigandine; and spare ye not her young men, destroy ye utterly all her host. 4. Thus the slain shall fall in the land of the Chaldeans, and *they that are* thrust through in her streets. 5. For Israel *hath* not *been* forsaken, nor Judah of his God, of the LORD of hosts; though their land was filled with sin against the holy One of Israel. 6. Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and deliver every man his soul: be not cut off in her iniquity: for this *is* the time of the LORD's vengeance: he will render unto her a recompense. 7. Babylon *hath been* a golden cup in the LORD's hand, that made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunken of her wine, therefore the nations are mad. 8. Babylon is suddenly fallen and destroyed: howl for her, take balm for her pain, if so be she may be healed. 9. We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed: forsake her, and let us go every one into his own country: for her judgment reacheth unto heaven, and is lifted up *even* to the skies. 10. The LORD hath brought forth our righteousness: come and let us declare in Zion the work of the LORD our God. 11. Make bright the arrows: gather the shields: the LORD hath raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes: for his device *is* against Babylon, to destroy it; because it *is* the vengeance of the LORD, the vengeance of his temple. 12. Set up the standard upon the walls of Babylon, make the watch strong, set up the watchmen, prepare the ambushes: for the LORD hath both devised and done that which he spake against the inhabitants of Babylon. 13. O thou that dwellest upon many waters, abundant in treasures, thine end is come, *and* the measure of thy covetousness. 14. The LORD of hosts hath sworn by himself, *saying*, Surely I will fill thee with men, as with caterpillers; and they shall lift up a shout against thee. 15. He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heaven by his understanding. 16. When he uttereth *his* voice, *there is* a multitude of waters in the heavens, and he causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth, he maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures. 17. Every man is brutish by *his* knowledge, every founder is confounded by the graven image: for his molten image *is* falshood, and *there is* no breath in them. 18. They *are* vanity, the work of errors: in the time of their visitation they shall perish. 19. The portion of Jacob *is* not like them, for he *is* the former of all things, and *Israel is* the rod of his inheritance: the LORD of hosts *is* his name. 20. Thou *art* my battle-ax *and* weapons of war: for with thee will I break in pieces the nations, and with thee will I destroy kingdoms: 21. And with thee will I break in pieces the horse and his rider, and with thee will I break in pieces the chariot and his rider. 22. With thee also will I break in pieces man and woman, and with thee will I break in pieces old and young, and with thee will I break in pieces the young man and the maid: 23. I will also break in pieces with thee the shepherd and his flock, and with thee will I break in pieces the husbandman and his yoke of oxen, and with thee will I break in pieces captains and rulers. 24. And I will render unto Babylon, and to all the inhabitants of Chaldea, all their evil that they have done in Zion in your sight, saith the LORD. 25. Behold, I *am* against thee, O destroying mountain, saith the LORD, which destroyest all the earth, and I will stretch out mine hand upon thee, and roll thee down from the rocks, and will make thee a burnt mountain. 26. And they shall not take of thee a stone for a corner, nor a stone for foundations, but thou shalt be desolate for ever, saith the LORD. 27. Set ye up a standard in the land, blow the trumpet among the nations, prepare the nations against her, call together against her the kingdoms of Ararat, Minni, and Ashchenaz, appoint a captain against her, cause the horses to come up as the rough caterpillers. 28. Prepare against her the nations with the kings of the Medes, the captains thereof, and all the rulers thereof, and all the land of his dominion. 29. And the land shall tremble and sorrow: for every purpose of the LORD shall be performed against Babylon, to make the land of Babylon a desolation without an inhabitant. 30. The mighty men of Babylon have forborn to fight, they have remained in *their* holds, their might hath failed, they became as women: they have burnt her dwelling-places, her bars are broken. 31. One post shall run to meet another, and one messenger to meet another, to shew the king of Babylon that his city is taken at *one* end, 32. And that the passages are stopped, and the reeds they have burnt with fire, and the men of war are affrighted. 33. For thus saith the LORD of hosts the God of Israel, The daughter of Babylon *is* like a threshing-floor, *it is* time to thresh her: yet a little while, and the time of her harvest shall come. 34. Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon hath devoured me, he hath crushed me, he hath made me an empty vessel, he hath swallowed me up like a dragon, he hath filled his belly with my delicates, he hath cast me out. 35. The violence done to me and to my flesh, *be* upon Babylon, shall the inhabitant of Zion say; and my blood upon the inhabitants of Chaldea, shall Jerusalem say. 36. Therefore thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will plead thy cause, and take vengeance for thee, and I will dry up her sea, and make her springs dry. 37. And Babylon shall become heaps, a dwelling-place for dragons, an astonishment, and an hissing without an inhabitant. 38. They shall roar together like lions: they shall yell as lions whelps. 39. In their heat I will make their feasts, and I will make them drunken, that they may rejoice and sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake, saith the LORD. 40. I will bring them down like lambs to the slaughter, like rams with he-goats. 41. How is Sheshach taken! and how is the praise of the whole earth surprized! how is Babylon become an astonishment among the nations! 42. The sea is come up upon Babylon: she is covered with the multitude of the waves thereof. 43. Her cities are a desolation, a dry land, and a wilderness, a land wherein no man dwelleth, neither doth *any* son of man pass thereby. 44. And I will punish Bel in Babylon, and I will bring forth out of his mouth that which he hath swallowed up, and the nations shall not flow together any more unto him, yea, the wall of Babylon shall fall. 45. My people, go ye out of the midst of her, and deliver ye every man his soul from the fierce anger of the LORD. 46. And lest your heart faint, and ye fear for the rumour that shall be heard in the land: a rumour shall both come *one* year, and after that in *another* year *shall come* a rumour, and violence in the land, ruler against ruler. 47. Therefore behold, the days come, that I will do judgment upon the graven images of Babylon, and her whole land shall be confounded, and all her slain shall fall in the midst of her. 48. Then the heaven, and the earth, and all that *is* therein, shall sing for Babylon: for the spoilers shall come unto her from the north, saith the LORD. 49. As Babylon *hath caused* the slain of Israel to fall: so at Babylon

Babylon ſhall fall the ſlain of all the earth. 50. Ye that have eſcaped the ſword, go away, ſtand not ſtill: remember the LORD afar off, and let Jeruſalem come into your mind. 51. We are confounded, becauſe we have heard reproach, ſhame hath covered our faces: for ſtrangers are come into the ſanctuaries of the LORDs houſe. 52. Wherefore behold, the days come, ſaith the LORD, that I will do judgment upon her graven images, and through all her land the wounded ſhall groan. 53. Though Babylon ſhould mount up to heaven, and though ſhe ſhould fortify the height of her ſtrength, *yet* from me ſhall ſpoilers come unto her, ſaith the LORD. 54. A ſound of a cry *cometh* from Babylon, and great deſtruction from the land of the Chaldeans. 55. Becauſe the LORD hath ſpoiled Babylon, and deſtroyed out of her the great voice, when her waves do roar like great waters, a noiſe of their voice is uttered. 56. Becauſe the ſpoiler is come upon her, *even* upon Babylon, and her mighty men are taken, every one of their bows is broken, for the LORD God of recompenſes ſhall ſurely requite. 57. And I will make drunk her princes, and her wiſe *men*, her captains and her rulers, and her mighty men; and they ſhall ſleep a perpetual ſleep, and not wake, ſaith the King, whoſe name *is* the LORD of hoſts. 58. Thus ſaith the LORD of hoſts, The broad walls of Babylon ſhall be utterly broken, and her high gates ſhall be burnt with fire, and the people ſhall labour in vain, and the folk in the fire, and they ſhall be weary.

The particulars of this copious prophecy are diſperſed and interwoven, and the ſame things left and returned to ſo often, that it could not well be divided into parts, but we muſt endeavour to collect them under their proper heads.

Let us then obſerve here,

1. An acknowledgment of the great pomp and power that Babylon had been in, and the uſe that God, in his providence, had made of it, *ver.* 7. *Babylon hath been a golden cup*, a rich and glorious empire, *a golden city*, Iſa. xiv. 4. *a head of gold*, Dan. ii. 38. filled with all good things, as a cup with wine; nay, ſhe had been *a golden cup in the Lord's hand*, he had, in a particular manner, filled and favoured her with bleſſings, he had made the earth *drunk with this cup*; ſome were intoxicated with her pleaſures, and debauched by her; others intoxicated with her terrors, and deſtroyed by her: And, in both ſenſes, the New Teſtament Babylon is ſaid to have made the kings of the earth drunk, *Rev.* xvii. 4. and xviii. 3. Babylon had alſo been God's *battle-ax*, it was ſo at this time when Jeremiah propheſied, and was likely to be yet more ſo, *ver.* 20. The forces of Babylon were God's *weapons of war*, tools in his hand with which he broke in pieces, and knocked down *nations* and *kingdoms*, *horſes* and *chariots*, which are ſo much the ſtrength of kingdoms, *ver.* 21. *man and woman*, *young and old*, with which kingdoms are repleniſhed, *ver.* 22. *the ſhepherd and his flock*, *the husbandman and his oxen*, with which kingdoms are maintained and ſupplied, *ver.* 23. Such havock as this the Chaldeans had made, when God employed them as inſtruments of his wrath for the chaſtiſing of the nations; and yet now Babylon her ſelf muſt fall. Note, Thoſe that have carried all before them a great while, yet will, at length, meet with their match, and their day alſo will come to fall, the rod will it ſelf be thrown into the fire at laſt; nor can any think it will exempt them from God's judgments, that they have been inſtrumental in executing his judgments on others.

2. A juſt complaint made of Babylon, and a charge drawn up againſt her by the Iſrael of God. 1. They are complained of for their incorrigible wickedneſs, *ver.* 9. *We would have healed Babylon, but ſhe is not healed.* The people of God, that were captives among them, endeavoured, according to the inſtructions given them, *Jer.* x. 11. to convince them of the folly of their idolatry, but they could not do it, ſtill they doted as much as ever upon their graven images, and therefore they reſolve to quit them, and go to their own country. Yet ſome underſtand this as ſpoken by the forces they had hired for their aſſiſtance, declaring they had done their beſt to ſave her from ruin, but it was all to no purpoſe, and therefore they had as good go home to their reſpective countries; for *her judgment reacheth unto heaven*, and it is in vain to withſtand it, or think to avert it. 2. They are complained of for their inveterate malice againſt Iſrael; other nations had been hardly uſed by the Chaldeans, but Iſrael only complains to God of it, and with confidence appeals to him, *ver.* 34, 35. *The king of Babylon has devoured me, and cruſhed me*, and never thought he could do enough to ruin me, *he has emptied me* of all that was valuable, hath *ſwallowed me up as a dragon*, or whale, ſwallows up the little fiſh by ſhoals, *he hath filled his belly*, filled his treaſures, *with my delicates*, with all my pleaſant things, *and hath caſt me out*, caſt me away as a *veſſel in which there is no pleaſure*; and now let them be accountable for all this: *Zion and Jeruſalem ſhall ſay*, Let *the violence done to me, and* my children, that are *my* own *fleſh*, and pieces of my ſelf, and all the blood of my people, which they have ſhed like water, *be upon* them; let the guilt of it lie upon them, and let it be required at their hands. Note, Ruin is not far off from thoſe that lie under the guilt of wrong done to God's people.

3. Judgment given upon this appeal by the righteous Judge of heaven and earth, on behalf of Iſrael againſt Babylon. He *ſits in the throne judging right*, is ready to receive complaints, and anſwers, *ver.* 36. *I will plead thy cauſe*, leave it with me, I will in due time plead it effectually, *and take vengeance for thee*, and every drop of Jeruſalem's blood ſhall be accounted for with intereſt; Iſrael and Judah ſeem to have been neglected and forgotten, but God has an eye to them, *ver.* 5. It is true, *their land was filled with ſin againſt the holy One of Iſrael*, they were a provoking people, and their ſins were a great offence to God, as a holy God, and as their God, their holy One; and therefore he juſtly delivered them up into the hands of their enemies, and might juſtly have abandoned them, and left them to periſh in their hands; but God deals better with them than they deſerve, and, notwithſtanding their iniquities, and his ſeverities, *Iſrael is not forſaken*, is not caſt off, though he be caſt out, but is owned and looked after by his God, by the Lord of hoſts; God is his God ſtill, and will act for him as the Lord of hoſts, a God of power. Note, Though God's people may have broken his laws, and fallen under his rebukes, yet it doth not therefore follow that they are thrown out of covenant; but God's care of them, and love to them, will *flouriſh again*, Pſalm lxxxix. 30, 33. The Chaldeans thought they ſhould never be called to an account for what they had done againſt God's Iſrael, but there is *a time* fixed *for vengeance*, ver. 6. We cannot expect it ſhould come ſooner than the time fixed, but then it will come, he *will render unto Babylon a recompenſe*, for the avenging of Iſrael is *the vengeance of the Lord*, who eſpouſeth their cauſe, it is *the vengeance of his temple*, ver. 11. as before, *chap.* l. 28. *The Lord God of recompenſes*, the *God to whom vengeance belongs*, *will ſurely requite*, ver. 56. will pay them home; he will *render unto Babylon all the evil they have done in Zion*, ver. 24. he will return it *in the ſight* of his people, they ſhall have the ſatisfaction to ſee their cauſe pleaded with jealouſy; they ſhall not only live to ſee thoſe judgments brought upon Babylon, but they ſhall plainly ſee them to be the puniſhment of the wrong they have done to Zion; any man may ſee it, and ſay, *Verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth*; for juſt as *Babylon hath cauſed the ſlain of Iſrael to fall*, has not only ſlain thoſe that were found in arms, but all, without diſtinction, even *all the land*, almoſt all were put to the ſword, ſo *at Babylon ſhall fall*, not only the ſlain of the city, but of *all the country*, ver. 49. Cyrus ſhall meaſure to the Chaldeans the ſame that they meaſured to the Jews, ſo that every obſerver may diſcern that God is recompenſing them for what they did againſt his people; but Zion's children ſhall in a particular manner triumph in it, *ver.* 10. *The Lord hath brought forth our righteouſneſs*, he has appeared in our behalf againſt thoſe that dealt unjuſtly with us, and has righted us; he has alſo made it to appear, that he is reconciled to us, and that we are yet in his eyes a *righteous nation*. Let it therefore be ſpoken of to his praiſe, *Come and let us declare in Zion the work of the Lord our God*, that others may be invited to join with us in praiſing him.

4. A declaration of the greatneſs and ſovereignty of that God who eſpouſeth Zion's cauſe, and undertakes to reckon with this proud and potent enemy, *ver.* 14. It is *the Lord of hoſts* that hath ſaid it, that hath *ſworn it*, has *ſworn it by himſelf*, for he could ſwear by no greater, that he will fill Babylon with vaſt and incredible numbers of the enemy's forces, will *fill it with men as with caterpillers*, that ſhall overpower it with multitudes, and need only to *lift up a ſhout* againſt it, for that ſhall be ſo terrible as to diſpirit all the inhabitants, and make them an eaſy prey to this numerous army. But who, and where is he that can break ſo powerful a kingdom as Babylon? The prophet gives an account of him from the deſcription he had formerly given of him, and of his ſovereignty and victory over all pretenders, *Jer.* x. 12, 13, 14, 15, 16. which was there intended for the conviction of the Babylonian idolaters, and the confirmation of God's Iſrael in the faith and worſhip of the God of Iſrael; and it is here repeated, to ſhew, that God will convince thoſe by his judgments, who would not be convinced by his word, that he is *God over all*. Let not any doubt, but that he, who has determined to deſtroy Babylon, is able to make his words good, for, 1. He is the God that made the world, *ver.* 15. and therefore nothing is too hard for him to do; it is in his name that our help ſtands, and on him our hope is built. 2. He has the command of all the creatures that he has made, *ver.* 16. his providence is a continued creation; he hath *wind and rain* at his diſpoſe; if he ſpeak the word, there is a *multitude of waters in the heavens*; and it is a wonder how they hang there, fed by *vapours out of the earth*; and it is a wonder how they aſcend thence: *Lightnings and rain* ſeem contraries, as fire and water, and yet they are produced together; and the wind, which ſeems arbitrary in its motions, and we *know not whence it comes*, yet we are ſure is brought *out of his treaſuries*. 3. The idols that oppoſe the accompliſhment of his word are a meer ſham, and their worſhippers brutiſh people,

ver. 17, 18. The idols are falſhood, they are vanity, they are *the work of errors*; when they come to be viſited, *i. e.* to be examined and enquired into, they periſh, *i. e.* their reputation ſinks, and they appear to be nothing; and thoſe *that make them are like unto them*; but between the God of Iſrael, and theſe gods of the heathen, there is no compariſon, *ver.* 19. *The portion of Jacob is not like them*; the God who ſpeaks this, and will do it, is the *former of all things*, and *the Lord of all hoſts*, and therefore can do what he will; and there is a near relation between him and his people, for he is *their portion*, and they are his, they put a confidence in him as their portion, and he is pleaſed to take a complacency in them, and a particular care of them, as the *lot of his inheritance*; and therefore he will do what is beſt for them. The repetition of theſe things here, which were ſaid before, intimates, both the certainty and importance of them, and obligeth us to take ſpecial notice of them; *God hath ſpoken once, yea, twice have we heard this, that power belongs to God*; power to deſtroy the moſt formidable enemies of his church; and if God thus *ſpeak once, yea, twice*, we are inexcuſable if we do not perceive it, and receive it.

5. A deſcription of the inſtruments that are to be employed in this ſervice. God hath *raiſed up the ſpirit of the kings of the Medes*, ver. 11. Darius and Cyrus, who come againſt Babylon by a divine inſtinct; for *God's device is againſt Babylon to deſtroy it*; they do it, but God deviſed it, he deſigned it, they are but accompliſhing his purpoſe, and acting as he directed. Note, God's counſel ſhall ſtand, and according to it all hearts ſhall move. Theſe whom God employs againſt Babylon, are compared, *ver.* 1. to a *deſtroying wind*, which either, by its coldneſs, blaſts the fruits of the earth, or, by its fierceneſs, blows down all before it; this wind is *brought out of God's treaſuries*, ver. 16. and it is here ſaid to be *raiſed up againſt them that dwell in the midſt of the Chaldeans*, thoſe of other nations that inhabit among them, and are incorporated with them. The Chaldeans riſe up againſt God by falling down before idols, and againſt them God will raiſe up deſtroyers, for he will be too hard for them that conteſt with him. Theſe enemies are compared to fanners, *ver.* 2. who ſhall *drive them away, as chaff* is driven away by the fan. The Chaldeans had been fanners to winnow God's people, *chap.* xv. 7. and to empty them, and now they ſhall themſelves be in like manner deſpoiled and diſperſed.

6. An ample commiſſion given them to deſtroy, and lay all waſte. Let them *bend their bow* againſt the archers of the Chaldeans, *ver.* 3. and *not ſpare her young men*, but *utterly deſtroy them*, for the Lord hath *both deviſed and done what he ſpake againſt Babylon*, ver. 12. This may animate the inſtruments he employs, by aſſuring them of ſucceſs; the methods they take are ſuch as God has deviſed, and therefore they ſhall ſurely proſper; what he hath ſpoken ſhall be done, for he himſelf will do it; and therefore let all neceſſary preparations be made; this they are called to, *ver.* 27, 28. Let *a ſtandard be ſet up*, under which to liſt ſoldiers for this expedition; *let a trumpet be blown* to call men together to it, and animate them in it; let the nations, out of which Cyrus's army is to be raiſed, prepare their recruits; let the kingdoms of Ararat and Minni, and Aſhkenaz, of Armenia, both the higher and the lower, and of Aſcania, about Phrygia and Bithynia, ſend in their quota of men for this ſervice: Let general officers be appointed, and the cavalry advance; let the horſes come up in *great numbers*, as the *caterpillers*, and come like them leaping and pawing in the valley: Let them lay the country waſte as *caterpillers* do, *Joel* ii. 4. eſpecially rough caterpillers: Let the kings and captains prepare nations againſt Babylon, for the ſervice is great, and there is occaſion for many hands to be employed in it.

7. The weakneſs of the Chaldeans, and their inability to make head againſt this threatning, deſtroying force. When God employed them againſt other nations, they had ſpirit and ſtrength to act offenſively, and went on with admirable reſolution, conquering and to conquer; but now it comes to their turn to be reckoned with, all their might and courage is gone, their hearts fail them, and none of all their men of might and mettle have found their hands to act ſo much as defenſively. They are called upon here to prepare for action, but it is ironically, and in an upbraiding way, *ver.* 11. *Make bright the arrows*, which are grown ruſty through diſuſe; *gather the ſhields*, that in a time of long peace and ſecurity have been ſcattered, and thrown out of the way, *ver.* 12. *Set up the ſtandard upon the walls of Babylon*, upon the towers on thoſe walls, to ſummon all that owed ſuit and ſervice to that mother city, now to come in to her aſſiſtance: Let them make the watch as ſtrong as they can, and appoint the centinels to their reſpective poſts, and prepare ambuſhes for the reception of the enemy. This intimates, that they would be found very ſecure and remiſs, and would need to be thus quickened; and they were ſo to that degree, that they were in the midſt of their revels when the city was taken; but that all their preparations ſhould be to no purpoſe; who will may call them to it, but they ſhall have no heart to come at the call, *ver.* 29. *The* whole *land ſhall tremble and ſorrow*, a univerſal conſternation ſhall ſeize upon them, for they ſhall ſee both the irreſiſtible arm, and the irreverſible counſel and decree of God againſt them, they ſhall ſee that God is making *Babylon a deſolation*, and therein is performing what he hath purpoſed; and then *the mighty men of Babylon have forborn to fight*, ver. 30. God having taken away their ſtrength and ſpirit, ſo that they have *remained in their holds*, not daring ſo much as to peep forth, the might both of their hearts and of their hands fails, they *became* as timorous *as women*, ſo that the enemy has, without any reſiſtance, *burnt her dwelling-places*, and *broken her bars*. It is to the ſame purpoſe, *ver.* 56, 57, 58. When the ſpoiler comes upon Babylon, her mighty men, that ſhould make head againſt him, are preſently taken, their weapons of war fail them, *every one of their bows is broken*, and ſtands them in no ſtead; their politicks fail them; they call councils of war, but their princes and captains, that ſit in council, to concert meaſures for the common ſafety, are made drunk, they are as men intoxicated through ſtupidity or deſpair, they can form no right notions of things, ſtagger, and are unſteady in their counſels and reſolves, and daſh one againſt another, and, like drunken men, fall out among themſelves; and at length *ſleep a perpetual ſleep*, and never *awake* from their wine, the wine of God's wrath, for it is to them an opiate that lays them into a fatal lethargy. The *walls of their city* fail them, *ver.* 58. When the enemy had found ways to ford Euphrates, which was thought impaſſable, yet ſure, think they, the walls are impregnable, they are *the broad walls of Babylon*, or, as the margin reads it, *the walls of broad Babylon*; the compaſs of the city, within the walls, was 385 furlongs, ſome ſay 480, that is about ſixty miles; the walls were 200 cubits high, and 50 cubits broad, ſo that two chariots might eaſily paſs by one another upon them: Some ſay, there was a threefold wall about the inner city, and the like about the outer; and the ſtones of the wall being laid in pitch inſtead of morter, *Gen.* xi. 3. were ſcarce ſeparable; and yet theſe ſhall be *utterly broken*, and *the high gates and towers ſhall be burnt*, and the people that are employed in defence of the city, ſhall *labour in vain, in the fire*, they ſhall quite tire themſelves, but ſhall do no good.

8. The deſtruction that ſhall be made of Babylon by theſe invaders. 1. It is a certain deſtruction, the doom is paſt, and it cannot be reverſed; a divine power is engaged againſt it, which cannot be reſiſted, *ver.* 8. *Babylon is fallen and deſtroyed*, is as ſure to fall, to fall into deſtruction, as if it were fallen and deſtroyed already, though, when Jeremiah propheſied this, and many a year after, it was in the height of its power and greatneſs. God declares, God appears againſt Babylon, *ver.* 25. *Behold, I am againſt thee*, and thoſe cannot ſtand long whom God is againſt; he will *ſtretch out his hand upon* it, a hand which no creature can bear the weight of, or withſtand the force of. It is his purpoſe which ſhall be performed, that *Babylon* muſt be *a deſolation*, ver. 29. 2. It is a righteous deſtruction; Babylon has made her ſelf meet for it, and therefore cannot fail to meet with it. For, *ver.* 25. *Babylon* has been *a deſtroying mountain*, very lofty and bulky as a mountain, and *deſtroying all the earth*, as the ſtones that are tumbled from high mountains ſpoil the grounds about them; but now it ſhall it ſelf be *rolled down from its rocks*, which were as the foundations on which it ſtood; it ſhall be levelled, its pomp and power broken: It is now a burning mountain, like Ætna, and the other vulcano's that throw out fire, to the terror of all about them; but it ſhall be a burnt mountain, it ſhall at length have conſumed it ſelf, and ſhall remain a heap of aſhes; ſo will this world be at the end of time. Again, *ver.* 33. *Babylon is like a threſhing-floor*, in which the people of God have been long threſhed, as ſheaves in the floor; but now the time is come that ſhe ſhall her ſelf be threſhed, and her ſheaves in her; her princes and great men, and all her inhabitants, ſhall be beaten in their own land, as in the threſhing-floor. The threſhing-floor is prepared, Babylon is by ſin made meet to be a ſeat of war, and her people, like corn at harveſt, are ripe for deſtruction, *Rev.* xiv. 15. *Mic.* iv. 12. 3. It is an unavoidable deſtruction. Babylon ſeems to be well fenced and fortified againſt it, *ſhe dwells upon many waters*, ver. 13. the ſituation of her country is ſuch, as that it ſeems inacceſſible, it is ſo ſurrounded, and the march of an enemy into it ſo embarraſſed by rivers. In alluſion to this, the New Teſtament Babylon is ſaid to *ſit upon many waters*, *i. e.* to rule over many nations, as the other Babylon did, *Rev.* xvii. 15. *Babylon* is *abundant in treaſures*, and yet *thine end is come*, and neither thy waters nor thy wealth ſhall ſecure thee. This end that comes ſhall be *the meaſure of thy covetouſneſs*, *i. e.* it ſhall be the ſtint of thy gettings, it ſhall ſet bounds to thine ambition and avarice, which otherwiſe had been boundleſs. God, by the deſtruction of Babylon, ſaid to its proud waves, *Hitherto ſhall ye come, and no further*. Note, If men will not ſet a meaſure to their covetouſneſs by wiſdom and grace, God will ſet a meaſure to it by his judgments. Babylon, thinking her ſelf very ſafe, and very great, was very proud, but ſhe will be deceived, *ver.* 53. *Though Babylon ſhould mount* her walls and palaces *up to heaven*, and though (becauſe what is high is apt to totter) ſhe ſhould take care to *fortify the height of her ſtrength*, yet all will not do, God will ſend ſpoilers againſt her, that ſhall break through her ſtrength, and bring down her height. 4. It is a gradual deſtruction, which, if they had pleaſed, they might have foreſeen, and had warning of; for, *ver.* 46. *A rumour will come one year*, that Cyrus is making vaſt preparations for war, *and after that in another year ſhall come a rumour*, that his deſign is upon Babylon, and he is ſteering his courſe that way; ſo that when he was a great way off, they might have ſent and deſired conditions of peace; but

they were too proud, too ſecure to do that, and their hearts were hardened to their deſtruction. 5. Yet, when it comes, it is a ſurprizing deſtruction. *Babylon is ſuddenly fallen*, ver. 15. the deſtruction comes upon them when they did not think of it, and is perfected in a little time, as that of the New Teſtament *Babylon in one hour*, Rev. xviii. 17. The king of Babylon, who ſhould have been obſerving the approaches of the enemy, was himſelf at ſuch a diſtance from the place where the attack was made, that it was a great while ere he had notice that the city was taken; ſo that they who were poſted near the place, ſent one meſſenger, one courier after another with advice of it, *ver.* 31. The foot-poſts ſhall meet at the court from ſeveral quarters with this intelligence to the king of Babylon, that his *city is taken at one end*, and there is nothing to obſtruct the progreſs of the conquerors, but they will be at the other end quickly. They are to tell him that the enemy hath *ſeized the paſſes*, ver. 32. the forts, or blockades upon the river; and having got over the river, they ſet fire to the reeds on the river-ſide, to alarm and terrify the city, ſo that all the men of war are affrighted, and have thrown down their arms, and ſurrendered at diſcretion. The meſſengers come, like Job's, one upon the heels of another, with theſe tidings, which are immediately confirmed with a witneſs, by the enemies being in the palace, and ſlaying the king himſelf, *Dan.* v. 30. And that profane feaſt which they were celebrating at the very time when the city was taken, which was both an evidence of their ſtrange ſecurity, and a great advantage to the enemy, ſeems here to be referred to, *ver.* 38, 39. *They ſhall roar together like lions*, as men in their revels uſe to do, when the wine is got into their heads; they call it ſinging, but in ſcripture language, and in the language of ſober men, it is called *yelling like lions whelps*. It is likely they were drinking confuſion to Cyrus and his army with loud huzza's; well, ſaith God, in their heat, when they are enflamed (*Iſa.* v. 11.) and their heads are hot with hard drinking, I will *make their feaſts*, I will *give them their potion*, they have paſſed their cup round, now *the cup of the Lord's right hand ſhall be turned unto them*, Hab. ii. 15, 16. a cup of fury, which ſhall *make them drunk, that they may rejoice*, or rather, *that they may revel it*, and *ſleep a perpetual ſleep*; let them be as merry as they can with that bitter cup, but it ſhall lay them to ſleep, never to wake more, as, *ver.* 57. for *on that night*, in the midſt of the jollity, was *Belſhazzar ſlain*. 6. It is to be a univerſal deſtruction, God will make thorough work of it, for as he will perform what he hath purpoſed, ſo he will perfect what he has begun. *The ſlain ſhall fall*, in great abundance, throughout *the land of the Chaldeans*, multitudes ſhall be *thruſt through in her ſtreets*, ver. 4. They are *brought down like lambs to the ſlaughter*, ver. 40. in ſuch great numbers, ſo eaſily; and the enemies make no more of killing them, than the butcher doth of killing lambs. The ſtrength of the enemy, and their invading of them, is here compared to an irruption and inundation of waters, *ver.* 42. *The ſea is come up upon Babylon*, which, when it has once broke through its bounds, there is no fence againſt, ſo that ſhe is *covered with the multitude of its waves*, overpowered by a numerous army: *Her cities* then become *a deſolation*, an uninhabited, uncultivated deſert, *ver.* 43. 7. It is a deſtruction that ſhall reach the gods of Babylon, the idols and images, and fall with a particular weight upon them. In token that *the whole land ſhall be confounded*, and all *her ſlain ſhall fall*, and that throughout all the country *the wounded ſhall groan*, *I will do judgment upon her graven images*, ver. 47. and, again, *ver.* 52. All muſt needs periſh, if their gods periſh, from whom they expect protection. Though the invaders are themſelves idolaters, yet they ſhall deſtroy the images and temples of the gods of Babylon, as an earneſt of the aboliſhing of all counterfeit deities. Bel was the principal idol that the Babylonians worſhipped, and therefore that is by name here marked for deſtruction, *ver.* 44. *I will puniſh Bel*, that great devourer, that image to which ſuch abundance of ſacrifices are offered, and ſuch rich ſpoils dedicated, and to whoſe temple there is ſuch a vaſt reſort; he ſhall diſgorge what he has ſo greedily regaled himſelf with; God will bring forth out of his temple all the wealth laid up there, *Job* xx. 15. His altars ſhall be forſaken, none ſhall regard him any more, and ſo that idol which was thought to be a wall to Babylon, ſhall fall and fail them. 8. It ſhall be a final deſtruction. You may *take balm for her pain*, but in vain, ſhe that *would not be healed* by the word of God, *ſhall not be healed* by his providence, *ver.* 8, 9. *Babylon* ſhall *become heaps*, ver. 37. and, to compleat its infamy, no uſe ſhall be made even of the ruins of Babylon, ſo execrable ſhall they be, and attended with ill omens! *ver.* 26. *They ſhall not take of thee a ſtone for a corner, nor a ſtone for foundations.* People ſhall not care for having any thing to do with Babylon, or whatever belonged to it. Or it notes, that there ſhall be nothing left in Babylon, on which to ground any hopes or attempts of raiſing it into a kingdom again, for, as it follows here, it *ſhall be deſolate for ever.* St. Jerom ſaith, that in his time, though the ruins of Babylon's walls were to be ſeen, yet the ground incloſed by them was a foreſt of wild beaſts.

9. Here is a call to God's people to go out of Babylon. It is their wiſdom when ruin is approaching to quit the city, and retire into the country, *ver.* 6. *Flee out of the midſt of Babylon*, and get into ſome remote corner, that you may ſave your lives, and may not be cut off in her iniquity. When God's judgments are abroad, it is good to get as far as we can from thoſe againſt whom they are levelled; as Iſrael from the tents of Korah. This agrees with the advice Chriſt gave his diſciples, with reference to the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, *Let them which be in Judea flee to the mountains*, Matt. xxiv. 16. It is their wiſdom to *get out of the midſt of Babylon*, leſt they be involved, if not in her ruins, yet in her fears, *ver.* 45, 46. *Leſt your heart faint, and ye fear for the rumour that ſhall be heard in the land.* Though God had told them that Cyrus ſhould be their deliverer, and Babylon's deſtruction their deliverance, yet they had been told alſo, that *in the peace thereof they ſhould have peace*, and therefore the alarms given to Babylon would put them into a fright, and, perhaps, they might not have faith and conſideration enough to ſuppreſs thoſe fears; for which reaſon they are here adviſed to get out of the hearing of the alarms. Note, Thoſe who have not grace enough to keep their temper in temptation, ſhould have wiſdom enough to keep out of the way of temptation. But this is not all: it is not only their wiſdom to quit the city, when the ruin is approaching, but it is their duty to quit the country too when the ruin is accompliſhed, and they are ſet at liberty by the pulling down of the priſon over their heads. This they are told, *ver.* 50, 51. *Ye* Iſraelites *that have eſcaped the ſword of the Chaldeans*, your oppreſſors, and of the Perſians, their deſtroyers, now the year of releaſe is come, *Go away, ſtand not ſtill*, haſten to your own country again, however you may be comfortably ſeated in Babylon, for this is not your reſt, but Canaan is. (1.) He puts them in mind of the inducements they had to return; *remember the Lord afar off*, his preſence with you now, though you are here afar off from your native ſoil; his preſence with your fathers formerly in the temple, though you are now afar off from the ruins of it. Note, Wherever we are in the greateſt depths, at the greateſt diſtances, we may, and muſt, remember the Lord our God; and in the time of the greateſt fears and hopes it is ſeaſonable to *remember the Lord*. And let Jeruſalem come into your mind, though it be now in ruins, yet *favour its duſt*, Pſal. cii. 14. though few of you ever ſaw it yet, believe the report you have had concerning it, from thoſe that *wept when they remembred Zion*; and think of Jeruſalem until you come up to a reſolution to make the beſt of your way thither. Note, When the city of our ſolemnities is out of ſight, yet it muſt not be out of mind. And it will be of great uſe to us in our journey through this world, to let the heavenly Jeruſalem come often into our mind. (2.) He takes notice of the diſcouragement which the returning captives labour under, *ver.* 51. being minded of Jeruſalem they cry out, *We are confounded*, we cannot bear the thought of it, *ſhame covers our faces* at the mention of it, for *we have heard of the reproach of the ſanctuary*, that it it is profaned and ruined by ſtrangers; how can we think of it with any pleaſure? To which he anſwers, *ver.* 52. that the God of Iſrael will now triumph over the gods of Babylon, and ſo that reproach will be for ever rolled away. Note, The believing proſpect of Jeruſalem's recovery will keep us from being aſhamed of Jeruſalem's ruins.

10. Here is the different reſentment of Babylon's fall, and it is the ſame we have of the *New Teſtament Babylon*, Rev. xviii. 9, 19.

(1.) Some ſhall lament the deſtruction of Babylon. There *is the ſound of a cry*, a great outcry coming from Babylon, *ver.* 54. lamenting this great deſtruction, the voice of mourning, becauſe the Lord hath *deſtroyed the voice* of the multitude, that great voice of mirth, which uſed to be heard in Babylon, *ver.* 55. We are told what they ſhall ſay in their lamentations, *ver.* 41. *How is Sheſhach taken?* and how are we miſtaken concerning her! How is that city ſurprized and become an *aſtoniſhment among the nations*, that was the praiſe, and glory, and admiration of the whole earth! See how that may fall into a general contempt, which has been univerſally cried up!

(2.) Yet ſome ſhall rejoice in Babylon's fall, not as it is the miſery of their fellow creatures, but as it is the manifeſtation of the righteous judgment of God, and as it opens the way for the releaſe of God's captives; upon theſe accounts *the heaven and the earth, and all that is in both ſhall ſing for Babylon*, ver. 48. the church in heaven and the church on earth ſhall give to God the glory of his righteouſneſs, and take notice of it with thankfulneſs to his praiſe. Babylon's ruin is Zion's praiſe.

59. ¶ The word which Jeremiah the prophet commanded Seraiah the ſon of Neriah, the ſon of Maaſeiah, when he went with Zedekiah the king of Judah into Babylon, in the fourth year of his reign: and *this* Seraiah *was* a quiet prince. 60. So Jeremiah wrote in a book all the evil that ſhould come upon Babylon, *even* all theſe words *that are* written againſt Babylon. 61. And Jeremiah ſaid to Seraiah, When thou comeſt to Babylon, and ſhalt ſee, and ſhalt read all theſe words, 62. Then thou ſhalt ſay, O LORD, thou haſt ſpoken againſt this place, to cut it off, that none ſhall remain in it, neither man nor beaſt, but that it ſhall be deſolate for ever. 63. And it ſhall be when thou haſt made an end of reading this book, *that* thou ſhalt bind a ſtone

a ſtone to it, and caſt it into the midſt of Euphrates: 64. And thou ſhalt ſay, Thus ſhall Babylon ſink, and ſhall not riſe from the evil that I will bring upon her: and they ſhall be weary. Thus far *are* the words of Jeremiah.

We have been long attending the judgment of Babylon, in this and the foregoing chapter, now here we have the concluſion of that whole matter.

1. A copy is taken of this prophecy, it ſhould ſeem by Jeremiah himſelf, for Baruch his ſcribe is not mentioned here, *ver.* 60. *Jeremiah wrote in a book all theſe words that are here written againſt Babylon.* He received this notice that he might give it to all whom it might concern. It is of great advantage both to the propagating and the perpetuating of the word of God, to have it written, and to have copies taken of the law, prophets, and epiſtles.

2. It is ſent to Babylon to the captives there, by the hand of Seraiah, who went there attendant on, or embaſſador for, king Zedekiah, *in the fourth year of his reign*, ver. 59. He *went with Zedekiah*, or, as the margin reads it, *on the behalf of Zedekiah, into Babylon.* The character given of him is obſervable, that this *Seraiah was a quiet prince*, a prince of reſt; he was in honour and power, but not as moſt of the princes then were, hot and heady, making parties, and heading factions, and driving things furiouſly, but was of a calm temper, ſtudied the things that made for peace, endeavoured to preſerve a good underſtanding between the king his maſter, and the king of Babylon, and to keep his maſter from rebelling: he was no perſecutor of God's prophets, but a moderate man; Zedekiah was happy in the choice of ſuch a man to be his envoy to the king of Babylon, and Jeremiah might ſafely intruſt ſuch a man with his errand too. Note, It is the real honour of great men to be quiet men, and it is the wiſdom of princes to put ſuch into places of truſt.

3. Seraiah is deſired to read it to his country-men that were already gone into captivity: *When thou ſhalt come to Babylon, and ſhalt ſee* what a magnificent place it is, how large a city, how ſtrong, how rich, and how well fortified, and ſhall therefore be tempted to think, ſure it will ſtand for ever; as the diſciples when they obſerved the buildings of the temple, concluded, nothing would *throw them down* but the end of the world, *Matt.* xxiv. 23. *then thou ſhalt read all theſe words*, to thy ſelf, and thy particular friends, for their encouragement in their captivity: let them with an eye of faith ſee to the end of theſe threatning powers, and comfoft themſelves and one another herewith.

4. He is directed to make a ſolemn proteſtation of the divine authority, and unqueſtionable certainty of that which he had read, *ver.* 62. *Then thou ſhalt* look up to God and ſay, *O Lord, thou haſt ſpoken againſt this place to cut it off.* This is like the angel's proteſtation, *Rev.* xix. 9. concerning the deſtruction of the New Teſtament Babylon, *Theſe are the true ſayings of God.* And *Rev.* xxi. 6. *Theſe words are true and faithful.* Though Seraiah ſees Babylon flouriſhing, having read this prophecy, he muſt foreſee Babylon falling; and, by virtue of it, muſt curſe its habitation, though it be *taking root*, Job v. 3. *O Lord, thou haſt ſpoken againſt this place*, and I believe what thou haſt ſpoken, that as thou knoweſt every thing, ſo thou canſt do every thing. Thou haſt paſſed ſentence upon Babylon and it ſhall be executed. *Thou haſt ſpoken againſt this place to cut it off*, and therefore we will neither envy its pomp, nor fear its power; when we ſee what this world is, how glittering its ſhews are, and how flattering its propoſals, let us read in the book of the Lord that its *faſhion paſſeth away*, and it ſhall ſhortly be *cut off*, and be *deſolate for ever*, and we ſhall learn to look upon it with a holy contempt. Obſerve here, when we have been reading the word of God, it becomes us to direct to him, whoſe word it is, an humble believing acknowledgment of the truth, equity and goodneſs of what we have read.

9. He muſt then tie a ſtone to the book and throw it into the midſt of the river Euphrates, as a confirming ſign of the things contained in it, ſaying, *Thus ſhall Babylon ſink, and not riſe*, for they *ſhall be weary*, they ſhall perfectly ſuccumb, as men tired with a burthen, under the load of *the evil that I will bring upon them*, which they ſhall never ſhake off, or get from under, *ver.* 63, 64. In the ſign it was the ſtone that ſunk the book, which otherwiſe would have ſwam, but in the thing ſignified it was rather the book that ſunk the ſtone; it was the divine ſentence paſſed upon Babylon in this propheey, that ſunk that city, which ſeemed *as firm as a ſtone.* The fall of the New Teſtament Babylon was repreſented by ſomething like this, but much more magnificent, *Rev.* xviii. 21. *A mighty angel caſt a great milſtone into the ſea, ſaying, Thus ſhall Babylon fall.* Thoſe that ſink under the weight of God's wrath and curſe, ſink irrecoverably. The laſt words of the chapter ſeal up the viſion and prophecy of this book: *Thus far are the words of Jeremiah*; not that this prophecy againſt Babylon was the laſt of his prophecies, for it was dated in the fourth year of Zedekiah, *ver.* 59. long before he finiſhed his teſtimony; but this is recorded laſt of his prophecies, becauſe it was to be laſt accompliſhed of all his prophecies againſt the Gentiles, *chap.* xlvi. 1. And the chapter which remains is purely hiſtorical, and, as ſome think, was added by ſome other hand.

CHAP. LII.

Hiſtory is the beſt expoſitor of prophecy; and therefore, for the better underſtanding the prophecies of this book, which relate to the deſtruction of Jeruſalem and the kingdom of Judah, we are here furniſhed with an account of that ſad event. It is much the ſame with the hiſtory we had 2 Kings xxiv. *and* xxv. *and many of the particulars we had before in that book, but the matter is here repeated and put together to give light to the book of the* Lamentations, *which follows next, and to ſerve as a key to it. That article in the cloſe concerning the advancement of Jehoiachin in his captivity, which happened after Jeremiah's time, gives colour to their conjecture, who ſuppoſe that this chapter was not written by Jeremiah himſelf, but by ſome man divinely inſpired among thoſe in captivity, for a conſtant memorandum to thoſe who in Babylon preferred Jeruſalem above their chief joy. In this chapter we have, (1.) The ill reign of Zedekiah, very ill in regard both of ſin and puniſhment,* ver. 1,—3. *(2.) The beſieging and taking of Jeruſalem by the Chaldeans,* ver. 4,—7. *(3.) The ſevere uſage which Zedekiah and the princes met with,* ver. 8,—11. *(4.) The deſtruction of the temple and the city,* ver. 12,—14. *(5.) The captivity of the people,* ver. 15, 16. *and the numbers of thoſe that were carried away into captivity,* ver. 28,—30. *(6.) The carrying off of the plunder of the temple,* ver. 17,—23. *(7.) The ſlaughter of the prieſts, and ſome other men in cold blood,* ver. 24,—27. *(8.) The better days which king Jehoiachin lived to ſee in the latter end of his time, after the death of Nebuchadnezzar,* ver. 31,—34.

1. ZEdekiah *was* one and twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jeruſalem; and his mothers name *was* Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. 2. And he did *that which was* evil in the eyes of the LORD, according to all that Jehoiakim had done. 3. For through the anger of the LORD it came to paſs in Jeruſalem and Judah, till he had caſt them out from his preſence, that Zedekiah rebelled againſt the king of Babylon. 4. ¶ And it came to paſs in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth *day* of the month, *that* Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon came, he and all his army againſt Jeruſalem, and pitched againſt it, and built forts againſt it round about. 5. So the city was beſieged unto the eleventh year of king Zedekiah. 6. And in the fourth month, in the ninth *day* of the month, the famine was ſore in the city, ſo that there was no bread for the people of the land. 7. Then the city was broken up, and all the men of war fled, and went forth out of the city by night, by the way of the gate between the two walls, which *was* by the kings garden, (now the Chaldeans *were* by the city round about) and they went by the way of the plain. 8. ¶ But the army of the Chaldeans purſued after the king, and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho, and all his army was ſcattered from him. 9. Then they took the king, and carried him up unto the king of Babylon to Riblah in the land of Hamath: where he gave judgment upon him. 10. And the king of Babylon ſlew the ſons of Zedekiah before his eyes: he ſlew alſo all the princes of Judah in Riblah. 11. Then he put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and the king of Babylon bound him in chains, and carried him to Babylon, and put him in priſon till the day of his death.

This narrative begins no higher than the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah. though there were two captivities before, one in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, the other in the firſt of Jeconiah; but, probably, it was drawn up by ſome of thoſe that were carried away with Zedekiah, as a reproach to themſelves for imagining that they ſhould not go into captivity, after their brethren, with which hopes they had long flattered themſelves. We have here,

1. God's juſt diſpleaſure againſt Judah and Jeruſalem for their ſin, *ver.* 3. His anger was againſt them to that degree, that he determined to *caſt them out from his preſence*, his favourable gracious preſence, as a father when he is extreamly angry with an undutiful ſon, bids him get out of his preſence. He expelled them from that good land that had ſuch tokens of his preſence in providential bounty, and that holy city and temple that had ſuch tokens of his preſence in covenant grace and love. Note, Thoſe that are baniſhed from God's ordinances, have reaſon to complain that they are in ſome degree *caſt out of his preſence*; yet none are caſt out from God's gracious preſence, but thoſe that by ſin have firſt thrown themſelves out of it. This fruit of ſin we ſhould therefore deprecate above any thing, as David, *Pſal.* li. 11. *Caſt me not away from thy preſence.*

2. Ze-

2. Zedekiah's ill conduct and management, to which God left him in diſpleaſure againſt the people. and for which God puniſhed him in diſpleaſure againſt him. Zedekiah was arrived to years of diſcretion when he came to the throne, he *was twenty one years old*, ver. 1. he was none of the worſt of the kings, we never read of his idolatries, yet his character is, that he *did evil in the eyes of the Lord*, for he did not do the good he ſhould have done. But that ill deed of his which did in a ſpecial manner haſten this deſtruction, was his *rebelling againſt the king of Babylon*, which was both his ſin and his folly, and brought ruin upon his people, not only meritoriouſly but efficiently: God was greatly diſpleaſed with him for his perfidious dealing with the king of Babylon, as we find, *Ezek.* xvii. 15, *&c.* and becauſe he was angry at Judah and Jeruſalem, he put him into the hand of his own counſels, to do that fooliſh thing which proved fatal to him and his kingdom.

3. The poſſeſſion which the Chaldeans at length gained of Jeruſalem after eighteen months ſiege. They ſate down before it, and blocked it up in the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign, in the tenth month, *ver.* 4. and made themſelves maſters of it in the *eleventh year*, *in the fourth month*, ver. 6. In remembrance of theſe two ſteps towards their ruin, while they were in captivity, they kept *a faſt in the fourth month*, *and a faſt in the tenth*, Zech. viii. 19. that in the *fifth month* was in remembrance of the burning of the temple, and that in the *ſeventh* of the murther of Gedaliah. We may eaſily imagine, or rather cannot imagine what a ſad time it was with Jeruſalem, during this year and half that it was beſieged, when all proviſions were cut off from coming to them, and they were ever and anon alarmed by the attacks of the enemy, and being obſtinately reſolved to hold out to the laſt extremity, nothing remained but a *certain fearful looking for of judgment*. That which diſabled them to hold out, and yet could not prevail with them to capitulate, was the *famine in the city*, ver. 6. there was *no bread for the people of the land*, ſo that the ſoldiers could not make good their poſts, but were rendered wholly unſerviceable; and then no wonder that *the city was broken up*, ver. 7. Walls, in ſuch a caſe, will not hold out long without men, no more than men without walls; nor will both together ſtand people in any ſtead without God and his protection.

4. The inglorious retreat of the king and his mighty men. They got out of the city *by night*, ver. 7. and made the beſt of their way, I know not whither, nor, perhaps, they themſelves; but the king was overtaken by the purſuers *in the plains of Jericho*, and his guards diſperſed, and all his army *ſcattered from him*, ver. 8. his fright was not cauſleſs, for where there is guilt, there will be fear in time of danger. But his flight was fruitleſs, for there is no eſcaping the judgments of God, they will *come upon the ſinner*, and will *overtake him*, let him flee where he will, *Deut.* xxviii. 15. and theſe judgments particularly that are here executed, were there threatned, *ver.* 52, 53, *&c.*

5. The ſad doom paſt upon Zedekiah by the king of Babylon, and immediately put in execution. He treated him as a rebel, *gave judgment upon him*, ver. 9. One cannot think of it without the utmoſt vexation and regret that a king, a king of Judah, a king of the houſe of David, ſhould be arraigned as a criminal at the bar of this heathen king: But he *humbled not himſelf before Jeremiah* the prophet, therefore God thus humbled him. Purſuant to the ſentence paſſed upon him by the haughty conqueror, *his ſons were ſlain before his eyes*, and all *the princes of Judah*, ver. 10. then *his eyes were put out*, and he was *bound in chains*, carried in triumph to Babylon, perhaps they made ſport with him, as they did with Sampſon, when his eyes were put out; however he was condemned to perpetual impriſonment, wearing out his life (I cannot ſay his days, for he ſaw day no more) in darkneſs and miſery, he was kept in priſon till *the day of his death*, but had ſome honour done him at his funeral, *chap.* xxxiv. 5. Jeremiah had often told him what it would come to, but he would not take warning when he might have prevented it.

12. Now in the fifth month, in the tenth *day* of the month (which *was* the nineteenth year of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon) came Nebuzar-adan captain of the guard, *which* ſerved the king of Babylon, into Jeruſalem, 13. And burnt the houſe of the LORD, and the kings houſe; and all the houſes of Jeruſalem, and all the houſes of the great *men* burnt he with fire. 14. And all the army of the Chaldeans that *were* with the captain of the guard, brake down all the walls of Jeruſalem round about. 15. Then Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard carried away captive *certain* of the poor of the people; and the reſidue of the people, that remained in the city, and thoſe that fell away, that fell to the king of Babylon, and the reſt of the multitude. 16. But Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard, left *certain* of the poor of the land for vine-dreſſers, and for huſbandmen. 17. Alſo the pillars of braſs that *were* in the houſe of the LORD, and the baſes, and the braſen ſea that *was* in the houſe of the LORD, the Chaldeans brake, and carried all the braſs of them to Babylon. 18. The caldrons alſo, and the ſhovels, and the ſnuffers, and the bowls, and the ſpoons, and all the veſſels of braſs wherewith they miniſtred, took they away. 19. And the baſons, and the fire-pans, and the bowls, and the caldrons, and the candleſticks, and the ſpoons, and the cups; *that* which *was* of gold *in* gold, and *that* which *was* of ſilver *in* ſilver, took the captain of the guard away. 20. The two pillars, one ſea, and twelve braſen bulls that *were* under the baſes, which king Solomon had made in the houſe of the LORD: the braſs of all theſe veſſels was without weight. 21. And *concerning* the pillars, the height of one pillar *was* eighteen cubits, and a fillet of twelve cubits did compaſs it, and the thickneſs thereof *was* four fingers: *it was* hollow. 22. And a chapiter of braſs *was* upon it, and the height of one chapiter *was* five cubits, with net-work and pomegranates upon the chapiters round about, all *of* braſs: the ſecond pillar alſo, and the pomegranates *were* like unto theſe. 23. And there were ninety and ſix pomegranates on a ſide, *and* all the pomegranates upon the net-work, *were* an hundred round about.

We have here an account of the woful havock that was made by the Chaldean army, a month after the city was taken, under the command of Nebuzar-adan, who was *captain of the guard*, or general of the army in this action. In the margin he is called the *chief of the ſlaughter-men*, or *executioners*, for ſoldiers are but ſlaughter-men, and God employs them as executioners of his ſentence againſt a ſinful people. Nebuzar-adan was chief of thoſe ſoldiers, but in the execution he did, we have reaſon to fear he had no eye to God, but he ſerved the king of Babylon and his own deſigns, now he came into Jeruſalem, into the very bowels of it, as captain of the ſlaughter-men there. And, 1. He laid the temple in aſhes, having firſt plundered it of every thing that was valuable, he *burnt the houſe of the Lord*, that holy and beautiful houſe, where their *fathers praiſed him*, Iſai. lxiv. 10. 2. He burnt the royal palace, probably that which Solomon built, after he had built the temple, which was ever ſince *the king's houſe*. 3. He burnt *all the houſes of Jeruſalem*, that is, all the houſes of the great men, or thoſe particularly; if any eſcaped, it was only ſome ſorry cottages for the poor of the land. 4. He *broke down all the walls of Jeruſalem*, to be revenged upon them for ſtanding in the way of his army ſo long. Thus, of a defenced city, it was made a ruin, *Iſai.* xxv. 2. 5. he *carried away many into captivity*, ver. 15. he took away *certain of the poor of the people*, i. e. of the people in the city, for *the poor of the land*, i. e. the poor of the country, he left for *vine dreſſers and husbandmen*. He alſo carried of *the reſidue of the people that remained in the city*, that had eſcaped the ſword and famine; and the deſerters, ſuch as he thought fit, or rather, ſuch as God thought fit; for he had already determined ſome for the *peſtilence*, ſome for the *ſword*, ſome for *famine*, and ſome for *captivity*, Jer. xv. 2.

But nothing is more particularly and largely related here, than the carrying away of the appurtenances of the temple. All that were of great value were carried away before, *the veſſels of ſilver and gold*, yet ſome of that ſort remained, which were now carried away, *ver.* 19. But moſt of the temple-prey that was now ſeized was of braſs; which, being of leſs value, was carried off laſt. When the gold was gone, the braſs ſoon went after, becauſe the people repented not, according to Jeremiah's prediction, *chap.* xxvii. 19, *&c.* when the walls of the city were demoliſhed, the pillars of the temple were pulled down too, and both in token that God, who was the ſtrength and ſtay both of their civil and their eccleſiaſtical government, was departed from them. No walls can protect thoſe, nor pillars ſuſtain thoſe from whom God withdraws. Theſe pillars of the temple were not for ſupport, for there was nothing built upon them, but for ornament and ſignificancy. They were called *Jachin*, *he will eſtabliſh*; and *Boaz*, *in him is ſtrength*; ſo that the breaking of theſe ſignified that God would no longer eſtabliſh his houſe, nor be the ſtrength of it. Theſe pillars are here very particularly deſcribed, *ver.* 21, 22, 23. from 1 *Kings* vii. 15. that the extraordinary beauty and ſtateline ſs of them may affect us the more with the demoliſhing of them. All the veſſels that beloaged to the brazen altar were carried away, for the iniquity of Jeruſalem, like that of Eli's houſe, was not to be purged by ſacrifice or offering, 1 *Sam.* iii. 14. It is ſaid, *ver.* 20. *The braſs of all theſe veſſels was without weight*; ſo it was in the making of them, 1 *Kings* vii. 47. *the weight of the braſs was not* then *found out*, 2 Chron. iv. 18. and ſo it was in the deſtroying of them. Thoſe that made great ſpoil of them, did not ſtand to weigh them, as purchaſers do, for whatever they weighed it was all their own.

24. ¶ And the captain of the guard took Seraiah the chief priest, and Zephaniah the second priest, and the three keepers of the door. 25. He took also out of the city an eunuch, which had the charge of the men of war, and seven men of them that were near the kings person, which were found in the city, and the principal scribe of the host, who mustered the people of the land, and threescore men of the people of the land *that were* found in the midst of the city. 26. So Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard took them, and brought them to the king of Babylon to Riblah. 27. And the king of Babylon smote them, and put them to death in Riblah, in the land of Hamath. Thus Judah was carried away captive out of his own land. 28. This *is* the people whom Nebuchadrezzar carried away captive; in the seventh year, three thousand Jews and three and twenty: 29. In the eighteenth year of Nebuchadrezzar he carried away captive from Jerusalem eight hundred thirty and two persons: 30. In the three and twentieth year of Nebuchadrezzar, Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard carried away captive of the Jews seven hundred forty and five persons: all the persons *were* four thousand and six hundred.

We have here a very melancholy account,

1. Of the slaughter of some great men in cold blood at Riblah, seventy-two in number, according to the number of the elders of Israel, *Numb.* xi. 26, 27. so they are computed, 2 *Kings* xxv. 18, 19. five out of the temple, two out of the city, five out of the court, and sixty out of the country. The account here agrees with that, except in one article; there it is said there were *five*, here, there were *seven* of those that were *near the king*; which Dr. Lightfoot reconciles thus, that he took away seven of those that were near the king, but two of them were Jeremiah himself, and Ebed-melech, but they were both discharged, as we have read before, so that there were only five of them put to death, and so the number was reduced to seventy-two; some of all ranks, for they had all corrupted their way; and, it is probable, such were made examples of, as had been most forward to excite and promote the rebellion against the king of Babylon. *Seraiah the chief priest* is put first, whose sacred character could not exempt him from this stroke, how should it when he himself had profaned it by sin? Seraiah the prince was *a quiet prince*, chap. li. 59. but, perhaps, Seraiah the priest was not so, but unquiet and turbulent, by which he had made himself obnoxious to the king of Babylon. The leaders of this people had caused them to err, and now they are in a particular manner made monuments of divine justice.

2. Of the captivity of the rest. Come and see how *Judah was carried away captive out of his own land*, ver. 27. and how it spued them out as it spued out the Canaanites that went before them, which God had told them it would certainly do, if they trod in their steps, and copied out their abominations, *Lev.* xviii. 28. Now here is an account,

(1.) Of two captivities which we had an account of before, one in the seventh year of Nebuchadnezzar, the same with that which is said to be in his eighth year, 2 *Kings* xxiv. 12. another in his eightcenth year, the same with that which is said, *ver.* 12. to be in his nineteenth year: But the sums here are very small, in comparison with what we find expressed concerning the former, 2 *Kings* xxiv. 14, 16. when there were eighteen thousand carried captive, whereas here they are said to be three thousand and three and twenty; and with what we may reasonably suppose concerning the latter, for when all the residue of the people were carried away, *ver.* 15. one would think there should be more than eight hundred and thirty-two souls; therefore Dr. Lightfoot conjectures that these accounts being joined to the story of the putting to death of the great men at Riblah, all that are here said to be carried away, were *put to death* as rebels.

(2.) Of a third captivity, not mentioned before, which was in the twenty-third year of Nebuchadrezzar, four years after the destruction of Jerusalem, *ver.* 30. then Nebuzar-adan came and *carried away seven hundred and forty-five* Jews; it is probable, this was done in revenge of the murther of Gedaliah, which was another rebellion against the king of Babylon, and that these who were now taken, were aiders and abetters of Ishmael in that murther, and were not only carried away, but put to death for it; yet this is uncertain. If this be the sum total of the captives which we have, *ver.* 30. *All the persons were four thousand and six hundred*, we may see how strangely they were reduced from what they had been, and may wonder as much how they came to be so numerous again, as afterwards we find them; for it should seem that, as at first in Egypt, so again in Babylon, the Lord made them fruitful in the land of their affliction, and the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied. And the truth is, this people were often miracles both of judgment and mercy.

31. ¶ And it came to pass in the seven and thirtieth year of the captivity of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, in the five and twentieth *day* of the month, *that* Evil-merodach king of Babylon, in the *first* year of his reign, lifted up the head of Jehoiachin king of Judah, and brought him forth out of prison, 32. And spake kindly unto him, and set his throne above the throne of the kings that *were* with him in Babylon, 33. And changed his prison-garments: and he did continually eat bread before him all the days of his life. 34. And *for* his diet, there was a continual diet given him of the king of Babylon, every day a portion until the day of his death, all the days of his life.

This passage of story concerning the reviving which king Jehoiachin had in his bondage, we had likewise before, 2 *Kings* xxv. 27,—30. only there it is said to be done on *the twenty-seventh day of the twelfth month*, here *on the twenty-fifth*; but, in a thing of this nature, two days break no squares in the account: It is probable, the orders were given for his release on the twenty-fifth day, but he was not presented to the king till the twenty-seventh. We may observe in this story,

1. That new lords make new laws. Nebuchadrezzar had long kept this unhappy prince in prison; and his son, though well affected to the prisoner, could not procure him any favour, nor one smile from his father; no more than Jonathan could for David from his father; but when the old peevish man was dead, his son countenanced Jehoiachin, and made him a favourite. It is common for children to undo what their fathers have done; it were well if it were always as much for the better as this here.

2. That the world we live in is a changing world. Jehoiachin, in his beginning, fell from a throne into a prison, but here he is advanced again to a throne of state, *ver.* 32. though not to a throne of power. As before the robes were changed into prison-garments, so now they were converted into robes again. Such chequer-work is this world, prosperity and adversity are set the one over against the other, that we may learn to *rejoice as though we rejoiced not, and weep as though we wept not.*

3. That though the night of affliction be very long, yet we must not despair, but that the day may dawn at last. Jehoiachin was thirty-seven years a prisoner, in confinement, in contempt, ever since he was eighteen years old, in which time we may suppose him so inured to captivity, that he had forgot the sweets of liberty; or rather, that, after so long an imprisonment, it would be doubly welcome to him. Let those whose afflictions have been lengthened out, encourage themselves with this instance; the vision will at the end speak comfortably, and therefore wait for it. *Dum spiro spero*, while there is life there is hope; *non si male nunc, & olim sic erit.*

4. That God can make his people to find favour in the eyes of those that are their oppressors, and unaccountably turn their hearts to pity them, according to that word, *Psalm* cvi. 46. *He made them to be pitied of all those that carried them captives.* He can bring those that have spoken roughly to speak kindly, and those to feed his people that have fed upon them. Those therefore that are under oppression, will find that it is not in vain to hope, and quietly to *wait for the salvation of the Lord.* Therefore our times are in God's hand, because the hearts of all we deal with are so.

And now, upon the whole matter, comparing the prophecy and the history of this book together, we may learn in general, 1. That it is no new thing for churches and persons highly dignified to degenerate, and become very corrupt. 2. That iniquity tends to the ruin of those that harbour it; and if it be not repented of, and forsaken, will certainly end in their ruin. 3. That external professions and privileges will not only not amount to an excuse for sin, and an exemption from ruin, but will be a very great aggravation of both. 4. That no word of God shall fall to the ground, but the event will fully answer the prediction; and the unbelief of man shall not make God's threatnings, any more than his promises, of none effect. The justice and truth of God are here written in bloody characters for the conviction or the confusion of all those that make a jest of his threatnings: Let them *not be deceived, God is not mocked.*

The end of the prophecy of JEREMIAH.

AN

EXPOSITION

OF THE

Lamentations of Jeremiah,

With Practical Obſervations.

Since it is certainly true what Solomon ſaith contrary to the common opinion of the world, that Sorrow is better than laughter, *and,* It is better to go into the houſe of mourning, than into the houſe of feaſting, *we ſhould come to the reading and conſideration of the melancholy chapters of this book, not only willingly, but with an expectation to edify ourſelves by them; which that we may do, we muſt compoſe ourſelves to a holy ſadneſs, and reſolve to weep with the weeping prophet. Let us conſider, (1.) The title of this book; in the Hebrew it has none, but is called (as the books of Moſes are) from the firſt word* Ecah, *how; but the Jewiſh commentators call it as the Greeks do, and we from them,* Kinoth, *Lamentations. As we have ſacred odes, or ſongs of joy, ſo have we ſacred elegies, or ſongs of lamentation; ſuch variety of methods has infinite Wiſdom taken to work upon us and move our affections, and ſo ſoften our hearts, and make them ſuſceptible of the impreſſions of divine truths, as the wax of the ſeal. We have not only* piped unto you, *but have* mourned *likewiſe,* Matt. xi. 17. *(2.) The penman of this book; it was Jeremiah the prophet, who is here Jeremiah the poet, and* vates *ſignifies both; therefore this book is fitly adjoined to the book of his prophecy, and is an appendix to it. We had there at large the predictions of the deſolations of Judah and Jeruſalem, and then the hiſtory of them, to ſhew how punctually the predictions were accompliſhed, for the confirming of our faith: Now here we have the expreſſions of his ſorrow upon occaſion of them, to ſhew that he was very ſincere in the proteſtations he had often made, that he did not deſire the woful day, but, on the contrary, the proſpect of it filled him with bitterneſs: When he ſaw theſe calamities at a diſtance, he wiſhed his* head water, and his eyes fountains of tears; *and when they came, he made it to appear he did not diſſemble in that wiſh, and that he was far from being diſaffected to his country, which was the crime his enemies charged him with. Though his country had been very unkind to him, and though the ruin of it was both a proof that he was a true prophet, and a puniſhment of them for proſecuting him as a falſe prophet, which would have tempted him to rejoice in it, yet he ſadly lamented it, and herein ſhewed a better temper than that which Jonah was of, with reſpect to Nineveh. (3.) The occaſion of theſe Lamentations was the deſtruction of Judah and Jeruſalem by the Chaldean army, and the diſſolution of the Jewiſh ſtate, both civil and eccleſiaſtical thereby. Some of the Rabbins will have theſe to be the Lamentations which Jeremiah penned upon occaſion of the death of Joſiah, which are mentioned* 2 Chron. xxxv. 25. *But though it is true that that opened the door to all the following calamities, yet theſe* Lamentations *ſeem to be penned in the ſight, not in the foreſight of thoſe calamities; when they were already come, not when they were at a diſtance; and there is nothing of Joſiah in them, and his praiſe, as was, no queſtion, in the* Lamentations *for him. No, it is Jeruſalem's funeral that this is an elegy upon. Others of them will have theſe* Lamentations *to be contained in the roll which Baruch wrote from Jeremiah's mouth, and which Jehoiakim burnt, and they ſuggeſt, that at firſt there were in it only the firſt, ſecond, and fourth chapters, but the third and fifth were the* many like words *that were afterwards added; but this is a groundleſs fancy, that roll is expreſly ſaid to be a repetition and ſummary of the prophet's ſermons,* Jer. xxxvi. 2. *(4.) The compoſure of it: it is not only poetical, but alphabetical, all except the fifth chapter, as ſome of David's pſalms are; each verſe beginning with a ſeveral letter in the order of the Hebrew alphabet, the firſt aleph, the ſecond beth,* &c. *but the third chapter is a triple alphabet, the three firſt beginning with aleph, the three next with beth,* &c. *which was a help to memory, it being deſigned that theſe mournful ditties ſhould be got by heart, and was an elegance in writing then valued, and therefore not now to be deſpiſed. They obſerve, that in the ſecond, third and fourth chapters the letter* pe *is put before* ajin, *which in all the Hebrew alphabets follow it; for a reaſon of which Dr. Lightfoot offers this conjecture, That the letter* ajin, *which is the numeral letter for* LXX, *was thus, by being diſplaced, made remarkable, to put them in mind of the ſeventy years, at the end of which God would turn again their captivity. (5.) The uſe of it: Of great uſe, no doubt, it was to the pious Jews in their ſufferings, furniſhing them with ſpiritual language to expreſs their natural grief by; helping to preſerve the lively remembrance of Zion among them and their children that never ſaw it, when they were in Babylon; directing their tears into the right chanel; for they are here taught to mourn for ſin, and mourn to God; and withal encouraging their hopes, that God would yet return and have mercy upon them, And it is of uſe to us, to affect us with godly ſorrow for the calamities of the church of God, (as becomes thoſe that are living members of it, and are reſolved to take our lot with it.*

CHAP.

CHAP. I.

We have here the first alphabet of this lamentation, twenty-two stanza's, in which the miseries of Jerusalem are bitterly bewailed, and her present deplorable condition aggravated, by comparing it with her former prosperous state; and all along sin is acknowledged and complained of as the procuring cause of all these miseries; and God is appealed to for justice against their enemies, and applied to for compassion towards them. The chapter is all of a piece, and the several remonstrances are interwoven; but here is, 1. *A complaint made to God of their calamities, and his compassionate consideration desired,* ver. 1,—11. 2. *The same complaint made to their friends, and their compassionate consideration desired,* ver. 12,—17. 3. *An appeal to God, and his righteousness, concerning it,* ver. 18,—22. *in which he is justified in their affliction, and is humbly sollicited to justify himself in their deliverance.*

1. HOW doth the city sit solitary, *that was* full of people! *how* is she become as a widow! she *that was* great among the nations, *and* princess among the provinces, *how* is she become tributary! 2. She weepeth sore in the night, and her tears *are* on her cheeks: among all her lovers she hath none to comfort *her*, all her friends have dealt treacherously with her, they are become her enemies. 3. Judah is gone into captivity, because of affliction, and because of great servitude: she dwelleth among the heathen, she findeth no rest: all her persecutors overtook her between the straits. 4. The ways of Zion do mourn, because none come to the solemn feasts: all her gates are desolate: her priests sigh, her virgins are afflicted, and she *is* in bitterness. 5. Her adversaries are the chief, her enemies prosper: for the LORD hath afflicted her; for the multitude of her transgressions, her children are gone into captivity before the enemy. 6. And from the daughter of Zion all her beauty is departed: her princes are become like harts *that* find no pasture, and they are gone without strength before the pursuer. 7. Jerusalem remembred in the days of her affliction, and of her miseries, all her pleasant things that she had in the days of old, when her people fell into the hand of the enemy, and none did help her, the adversaries saw her, *and* did mock at her sabbaths. 8. Jerusalem hath grievously sinned: therefore she is removed: all that honoured her, despise her, because they have seen her nakedness: yea, she sigheth, and turneth backward. 9. Her filthiness *is* in her skirts, she remembreth not her last end, therefore she came down wonderfully: she had no comforter: O LORD, behold my affliction: for the enemy hath magnified *himself*. 10. The adversary hath spread out his hand upon all her pleasant things: for she hath seen *that* the heathen entred into her sanctuary, whom thou didst command *that* they should not enter into thy congregation. 11. All her people sigh, they seek bread, they have given their pleasant things for meat to relieve the soul: see, O LORD, and consider, for I am become vile.

Those that have any disposition to *weep with them that weep*, one would think, should scarce be able to refrain from tears at the reading of these verses, so very pathetical are the lamentations here.

1. The miseries of Jerusalem are here complained of as very pressing, and, by many circumstances, very much aggravated. Let us take a view of these miseries.

(1.) As to their civil state.

1. A city that was populous, is now depopulated, *ver.* 1. It is spoken of by way of admiration; Who would have thought that ever it should come to this! Or by way of enquiry; What is it that hath brought it to this? Or by way of lamentation; Alas, alas, (as *Rev.* xviii. 10, 16, 19.) *how doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people!* She was full of her own people, that replenished her; and full of the people of other nations that resorted to her; with whom she had both profitable commerce, and pleasant converse: But now her own people are carried into captivity, and strangers make no court to her; she *sits solitary:* The *chief places of the city*, are not now, as they used to be, *places of concourse*, where *wisdom cried*, Prov. i. 20, 21. and justly are they left unfrequented, because wisdom's cry there was not heard. Note, Those that are never so much increased, God can soon diminish. *How is she become as a widow!* Her king that was, or should have been as a husband to her, is cut off and gone: Her God is departed from her, and hath given her a bill of divorce: She is emptied of her children, is solitary and sorrowful as a widow. Let no family, no state, not Jerusalem, no, nor Babylon her self, be secure and say, *I sit as a queen*, and shall never *sit as a widow*, Isa. xlvii. 8. Rev. xviii. 7.

2. A city that had dominion, is now in subjection. She had been *great among the nations*, greatly loved by some, and greatly feared by others, and greatly observed and obeyed by both; some made her presents, and others paid her taxes; so that she was really *princess among the provinces*, and every sheaf bowed to hers, even the princes of the people intreated her favour: But now the tables are turned, she has not only lost her friends, and *sits solitary*, but has lost her freedom too, and sits *tributary*; she paid tribute to Egypt first, and then to Babylon. Note, Sin brings a people, not only into solitude, but into slavery.

3. A city that used to be full of mirth, is now become melancholy, and, upon all accounts, full of grief. Jerusalem had been a joyous city, whither the tribes went up on purpose to rejoice before the Lord; it has been *the joy of the whole earth*, but now *she weepeth sore*, her laughter is turned into mourning, her solemn feasts are all gone; she weeps *in the night*, as true mourners do that weep in secret, in silence, and solitude; *in the night*, when others compose themselves to rest, her thoughts are most intent upon her troubles, and grief then plays the tyrant. What the prophet's head was for her, when she regarded it not, now her head is, *as waters, and* her *eyes fountains of tears*, so that she *weeps day and night*, Jer. ix. 1. *her tears are* continually *on her cheeks:* Though nothing dries away sooner than a tear, yet fresh griefs extort fresh tears, so that her cheeks are never free from them. Note, There is nothing more commonly seen *under the sun*, than *the tears of the oppressed*, with whom *the clouds return after the rain*, Eccl. iv. 1.

4. Those that were separated from the heathen, now *dwell among the heathen*; that were a peculiar people, are now a mingled people, *ver.* 3. *Judah is gone into captivity*, out of their own land into the land of their enemies, and there she abides, and is likely to abide, among those that are aliens to God, and the covenants of promise, with whom *she findeth no rest*, no satisfaction of mind, nor any settlement of abode, but is continually hurried from place to place, at the will of the victorious, imperious tyrants. And, again, *ver.* 5. *Her children are gone into captivity before the enemy*; they that were to have been the seed of the next generation are carried off; so that the land that is now desolate is likely to be still desolate, and lost, for want of heirs. Those that dwell among their own people, and that a free people, and in their own land, would be more thankful for the mercies they thereby enjoy, if they would but consider the miseries of those that are forced into strange countries.

5. Those that used in their wars to conquer, are now conquered, and triumphed over. *All her persecutors overtook her between the straits*, ver. 3. they gained all possible advantages against her, so that her people unavoidably *fell into the hand of the enemy*, for there was no way to escape, *ver.* 7. they were hemmed in on every side, and which way soever they attempted to flee, they found themselves embarassed; and when they made the best of their way they could make nothing of it, but were overtaken, and overcome; so that every where *her adversaries are the chief, and her enemies prosper*, ver. 5. which way soever their sword turns they get the better. Such straits do men bring themselves into by sin! If we allow that which is our greatest adversary and enemy to have dominion over us, and to be chief in us, justly will our other enemies be suffered to have dominion over us.

6. Those that had been not only a distinguished but a dignified people, on whom God had put honour, and to whom all their neighbours had paid respect, are now brought into contempt, *ver.* 8. *All that honoured her* before, *despise her*; those that courted an alliance with her, now value it not; that caressed her, when she was in pomp and prosperity, slight her now she is in distress, *because they have seen her nakedness.* By the prevalency of the enemies against her they perceive her weakness, and that she is not so strong a people as they thought she had been; and by the prevalency of God's judgments against her they perceive her wickedness, which now comes to light, and is every where talked of. Now it appears how they have vilified themselves by their sins, *the enemies magnify themselves* against them, *ver.* 9. they trample upon them, and insult over them, and in their eyes they are *become vile*, the tail of the nations, that were the head. Note, *Sin is the reproach of any people.*

7. Those that lived in a fruitful land, were ready to perish, and many of them did perish for want of necessary food, *ver.* 11. *All her people sigh* in despondency and despair, they are ready to faint away, their spirits fail, and therefore they sigh, for *they seek bread*, and seek it in vain: They were brought at last to that extremity, that there was *no bread for the people of the land*, Jer. lii. 6. and in their captivity they had much ado to get bread, *chap.* v. 6. *They have given their pleasant things*, their jewels and pictures, and all the furniture of their closets and cabinets, which they used to please themselves with looking upon, they have sold these to buy bread for themselves and their families, have parted with them *for meat to relieve the soul*, or, as the margin is, *to make the soul come again*, when they were ready to faint away. They desired no other cordial but meat. *All that a man hath will he give for life*, and for

for bread, which is the ſtaff of life. Let thoſe that abound in pleaſant things, not be proud of them, or fond of them, for the time may come when they may be glad to let them go for neceſſary things. And let thoſe who have competent food to relieve their ſoul, be content with it, and thankful for it, though they have not pleaſant things.

(2.) We have here an account of their miſeries in their eccleſiaſtical ſtate, the ruin of their ſacred intereſt, which was much more to be lamented than that of their ſecular concerns.

1. Their religious feaſts were no more obſerved, no more frequented, *ver.* 4. *The ways of Zion do mourn*, they look melancholy, overgrown with graſs and weeds. It uſed to be a pleaſant diverſion to ſee people continually paſſing and repaſſing in the highway that led to the temple, but now you may ſtand there long enough and ſee no body ſtir, for *none come to the ſolemn feaſts*, a full end is put to them by the deſtruction of that which was the *city of our ſolemnities*, Iſa. xxxiii. 20. *The ſolemn feaſts* had been neglected and profaned, *Iſa.* i. 11, 12. and therefore juſtly is an end now put to them: But when thus *the ways of Zion* are made to *mourn*, all the ſons of Zion cannot but mourn with them. It is very grievous to good men to ſee religious aſſemblies broken up and ſcattered, and thoſe reſtrained from them that would gladly attend them. And as *the ways of Zion mourned*, ſo *the gates of Zion*, in which the faithful worſhippers uſed to meet, *are deſolate*, for there is none to meet in them. Time was when *the Lord loved the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob*, but now he hath forſaken them, and is provoked to withdraw from them, and therefore it cannot but fare with them, as it did with the temple, when Chriſt quitted it, *Behold your houſe is left unto you deſolate*, Matt. xxiii. 38.

2. Their religious perſons were quite diſabled to perform their wonted ſervices, were quite diſpirited; *her prieſts ſigh*, for the deſolations of the temple, their ſongs are turned into ſighs; they ſigh for they have nothing to do, and therefore there is nothing to be had; they ſigh as the people, *ver.* 11. *for want of bread*, becauſe the offerings of the Lord, which were there livelihood, failed. It is time to ſigh when the prieſts the Lord's miniſters ſigh. *Her virgins* alſo, that uſed, with their muſick and dancing, to grace the ſolemnities of their feaſts, *are afflicted*, and *in heavineſs*. Notice is taken of their ſervice in the day of Zion's proſperity, *Pſalm* lxviii. 25. *Among them were the damſels playing with timbrels*, and therefore notice is taken of the failing of it now. *Her virgins are afflicted*, and therefore *ſhe is in bitterneſs*, i. e. all the inhabitants of Zion are ſo, whoſe character it is, that they are *ſorrowful for the ſolemn aſſembly*, and that to them *the reproach of it is a burthen*, Zeph. iii. 18.

3. Their religious places were profaned, *ver.* 10. *The heathen entered into her ſanctuary*, into the temple it ſelf, into which no Iſraelite was permitted to enter, though never ſo reverently and devoutly, but the prieſts only: *The ſtranger that comes nigh*, even to worſhip there, *ſhall be put to death:* Thither the heathen now crowd rudely in, not to worſhip, but to plunder. God had commanded that *the heathen ſhould not* ſo much as *enter into the congregation*, nor be incorporated with the people of the Jews, *Deut.* xxiii. 3. yet now they *enter into the ſanctuary* without controll. Note, Nothing is more grievous to thoſe who have a true concern for the glory of God, nor is more lamented, than the violation of God's laws, and the contempt they ſee put upon ſacred things. What *the enemy did wickedly in the ſanctuary*, was complained of, *Pſalm* lxxiv. 3, 4.

4. Their religious utenſils, and all the rich things with which the temple was adorned and beautified, and which were made uſe of in the worſhip of God, were made a prey to the enemy, *ver.* 10. *The adverſary hath ſpread out his hand upon all her pleaſant things*, hath graſped them all, ſeized them all for himſelf: What theſe pleaſant things are we may learn from, *Iſa.* lxiv. 11. where, to the complaint of the burning of the temple, it is added, *all our pleaſant things are laid waſte*; the ark and the altar, and all the other tokens of God's preſence with them, theſe were their pleaſant things above any other things, and theſe were now broken to pieces, and carried away: Thus from *the daughter of Zion all her beauty is departed*, ver. 6. *The beauty of holineſs* was the *beauty of the daughter of Zion*; the temple, that holy and beautiful houſe, when that was deſtroyed, her beauty was gone; that was the breaking of *the ſtaff of beauty*, the taking away of the pledges and ſeals of the covenant, *Zech.* xi. 10.

5. Their religious days were made a jeſt of, *ver.* 7. *The adverſaries ſaw her, and did mock at her ſabbaths:* They laughed at them for their obſerving of one day in ſeven, as a day of reſt from worldly buſineſs: Juvenal, a heathen poet, ridicules the Jews in his time for it, *Cui ſeptima quæque fuit lux ignava, & vitæ partem non attigit ullam*, for loſing a ſeventh part of their time; whereas ſabbaths, if they be ſanctified as they ought to be, will turn to a better account, than all the days of the week beſide. And whereas the Jews profeſſed they did it in obedience to their God, and to his honour, they asked them what they got by it now, what profit had they in keeping the ordinances of their God, who now deſerted them in their diſtreſs. Note, It is a very great trouble to all that love God, to hear his ordinances mocked at, and particularly his ſabbaths; Zion calls them *her ſabbaths*, for the ſabbath was made for men; they are his inſtitutions, but they are her privileges; and the contempt put upon ſabbaths all the ſons of Zion take to themſelves, and lay to heart accordingly; and will not look upon ſabbaths, or any other divine ordinances, as leſs honourable, nor value them leſs, for their being mocked at.

6. That which greatly aggravated all theſe grievances was, that her preſent ſtate was juſt the reverſe of what it had been when time was, *ver.* 7. Now, *in the days of affliction and miſery*, when every thing was black and diſmal, *ſhe remembers all her pleaſant things that ſhe had in the days of old*, and now knows how to value them better than formerly when ſhe had the full enjoyment of them. God often makes us know the worth of mercies by the want of them. And adverſity is moſt hardly born by thoſe that are fallen into it from the height of proſperity. This cut David to the heart, when he was baniſhed from God's ordinances, that he could remember when he *went with the multitude to the houſe of God*, Pſalm xlii. 4.

2. The ſins of Jeruſalem are here complained of as the procuring, provoking cauſe of all theſe calamities: Whoever are the inſtruments, God is the author of all theſe troubles, it is *the Lord* that *has afflicted her*, ver. 5. and he has done it as a righteous Judge, for *ſhe has ſinned.*

(1.) Her ſins are for number numberleſs: Are her troubles many? her ſins are many more: It is *for the multitude of her tranſgreſſions* that *the Lord has afflicted her.* See *Jer.* xxx. 14. When the tranſgreſſions of a people are multiplied, we cannot ſay, as Job doth, it is *without cauſe* that their *wounds are multiplied*, Job ix. 17.

(2.) They are for nature exceeding heinous, *ver.* 8. *Jeruſalem hath grievouſly ſinned*; hath *ſinned ſin*, ſo the word is; ſinned wilfully, deliberately; hath ſinned that ſin, which of all others is the abominable thing that the Lord hates, the ſin of idolatry. The ſins of Jeruſalem, that makes ſuch a profeſſion, and enjoys ſuch privileges, are of all other the moſt grievous ſins. She hath *ſinned grievouſly*, ver. 8. and therefore, *ver.* 9. ſhe *came down wonderfully.* Note, Grievous ſins bring wondrous ruin; there are ſome workers of iniquity to whom there is a ſtrange puniſhment, *Job* xxxi. 3.

(3.) They are ſuch ſins as may plainly be read in the puniſhment. 1. They have been very oppreſſive, and therefore are juſtly oppreſſed, *ver.* 3. *Judah is gone into captivity*, and it is, *becauſe of affliction and great ſervitude*, i. e. becauſe the rich among them afflicted the poor, and made them ſerve with rigour, and particularly (as the Chaldee paraphraſeth it) becauſe they had oppreſſed their Hebrew ſervants, which is charged upon them, *Jer.* xxxiv. 11. Oppreſſion was one of their crying ſins, *Jer.* vi. 6, 7. and it is a ſin that cries loud. 2. They have made themſelves vile, and therefore are juſtly vilified: They all *deſpiſe her*, ver. 8. for *her filthineſs is in her skirts*; it appears upon her garments that ſhe hath rolled them in the mire of ſin. None can ſtain our glory, if we did not ſtain it our ſelves. 3. They have been very ſecure, and therefore are juſtly ſurprized with this ruin, *ver.* 9. *She remembreth not her laſt end*, ſhe did not take the warning that was given her to *conſider her latter end*, to conſider what would be the end of ſuch wicked courſes as ſhe took, and therefore ſhe *came down wonderfully*, in an aſtoniſhing manner, that ſhe might be made to feel what ſhe would not fear; therefore God ſhall *make their plagues wonderful.*

3. Jeruſalem's friends are here complained of as falſe and faint-hearted, and very unkind; they *have all dealt treacherouſly with her*, ver. 2. ſo that, in effect, *they are become her enemies.* Her deceivers have created her as much vexation as her deſtroyers: The ſtaff that breaks under us may do us as great a miſchief as the *ſtaff that beats us*, Ezek. xxix. 6, 7. *Her princes*, that ſhould have protected her, have not courage enough to make head againſt the enemy for their own preſervation; they *are like harts*, that, upon the firſt alarm, betake themſelves to flight, and make no reſiſtance; nay, they *are like harts* that are famiſhed for want of *paſture*, and therefore *are gone without ſtrength before the purſuer*, and, having no ſtrength for flight, are ſoon run down and made a prey of. Her neighbours are unneighbourly, for, 1. There is none *to help her*, ver. 7. either they could not, or would not; nay, 2. *She has no comforter*, none to ſympathize with her, or ſuggeſt any thing to alleviate her griefs, *ver.* 7, 9. like Job's friends, they ſaw it was to no purpoſe, her *grief was* ſo *great*; and *miſerable comforters were they all* in ſuch a caſe.

4. Jeruſalem's God is here complained to, concerning all theſe things, and all is referred to his compaſſionate conſideration, *ver.* 9. *O Lord, behold my affliction*, and take cognizance of it; and, *ver.* 11. *See, O Lord, and conſider*, take order about it. Note, The only way to make our ſelves eaſy under our burthens is, to caſt them upon God firſt, and leave it to him to do with us as ſeemeth him good.

12. ¶ *Is it* nothing to you, all ye that paſs by? behold and ſee, if there be any ſorrow like unto my ſorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the LORD hath afflicted *me*, in the day of his fierce anger. 13. From above hath he ſent fire into my bones, and it prevaileth againſt

againſt them: he hath ſpread a net for my feet, he hath turned me back: he hath made me deſolate, *and* faint all the day. 14. The yoke of my tranſgreſſions is bound by his hand: they are wreathed, *and* come up upon my neck: he hath made my ſtrength to fall, the LORD hath delivered me into *their* hands, *from whom* I am not able to riſe up. 15. The LORD hath trodden under foot all my mighty *men* in the midſt of me: he hath called an aſſembly againſt me, to cruſh my young men: the LORD hath trodden the virgin, the daughter of Judah, *as* in a wine-preſs. 16. For theſe *things* I weep, mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water, becauſe the comforter that ſhould relieve my ſoul, is far from me: my children are deſolate, becauſe the enemy prevailed. 17. Zion ſpreadeth forth her hands, *and there is* none to comfort her: the LORD hath commanded concerning Jacob, *that* his adverſaries *ſhould be* round about him: Jeruſalem is as a menſtruous woman among them. 18. ¶ The LORD is righteous, for I have rebelled againſt his commandment: hear, I pray you, all people, and behold my ſorrow: my virgins and my young men are gone into captivity. 19. I called for my lovers, *but* they deceived me; my prieſts and mine elders gave up the ghoſt in the city, while they ſought their meat to relieve their ſouls. 20. Behold, O LORD, for I *am* in diſtreſs; my bowels are troubled; mine heart is turned within me, for I have grievouſly rebelled: abroad the ſword bereaveth, at home *there is* as death. 21. They have heard that I ſigh, *there is* none to comfort me: all mine enemies have heard of my trouble, they are glad that thou haſt done *it*: thou wilt bring the day *that* thou haſt called, and they ſhall be like unto me. 22. Let all their wickedneſs come before thee: and do unto them, as thou haſt done unto me for all my tranſgreſſions: for my ſighs *are* many, and my heart *is* faint.

The complaints here are for ſubſtance the ſame with thoſe in the foregoing part of the chapter; but in theſe verſes the prophet, in the name of the lamenting church, doth more particularly acknowledge the hand of God in theſe calamities, and the righteouſneſs of his hand.

1. The church in diſtreſs doth here magnify her affliction; and yet no more than there was cauſe for; her groaning was not heavier than her ſtrokes. She appeals to all ſpectators, *See if there be any ſorrow like unto my ſorrow*, ver. 12. This might, perhaps, be truly ſaid of Jeruſalem's griefs, but we are apt to apply it too ſenſibly to our ſelves when we are in trouble, and more than there is cauſe for. Becauſe we feel moſt from our own burthen, and cannot be perſwaded to reconcile our ſelves to it, we are ready to cry out, Surely, never was *ſorrow like unto our ſorrow*; whereas, if our troubles were to be thrown into a common ſtock with thoſe of others, and then an equal dividend made, ſhare and ſhare like, rather than ſtand to that, we would each of us ſay, Pray, give me my own again.

2. She doth here look beyond the inſtruments to the author of her troubles, and own them all to be directed, determined, and diſpoſed of by him. It is *the Lord* that *has afflicted me*, and he has *afflicted me*, becauſe he is angry with me; the greatneſs of his diſpleaſure may be meaſured by the greatneſs of my diſtreſs; it is *in the day of his fierce anger*, ver. 12. Afflictions cannot but be very much our griefs, when we ſee them ariſing from God's wrath; ſo the church doth here. 1. She is as one in a fever, and the fever is of God's ſending; *he hath ſent fire into my bones*, ver. 13. a preternatural heat, which *prevails againſt them*, ſo that they are *burnt like a hearth*, Pſalm cii. 3. pained and waſted, and dried away. 2. She is as one in a net, which the more he ſtruggles to get out of, the more he is entangled in, and this net is of God's ſpreading: The enemies could not have ſucceeded in their ſtratagems, but that God hath *ſpread a net for my feet*. 3. She is as one in a wilderneſs, whoſe way is embarraſſed, ſolitary, and tireſome; *he hath turned me back*, that I cannot go on, *hath made me deſolate*, that I have nothing to ſupport me with, but am *faint all the day*. 4. She is as one in a yoke, not yoked for ſervice, but for penance, tied neck and heels together, *ver.* 14. *The yoke of my tranſgreſſions is bound by his hand.* Obſerve, we never are entangled in any yoke but it is framed out of our own tranſgreſſions: The ſinner is *holden with the cords of his own ſins*, Prov. v. 22. The yoke of Chriſt's commands is an *eaſy yoke*, Matt. xi. 30. but that of our own tranſgreſſions is a heavy one. God is ſaid to bind this yoke when he chargeth guilt upon us, and brings us into thoſe inward and outward troubles which our ſins have deſerved; when conſcience, as his deputy, binds us over to his judgment, then the *yoke is bound* and *wreathed by the hand* of his juſtice, and nothing but the hand of his pardoning mercy will unbind it. 5. She is as one in the dirt, and he it is that has *trodden under foot all her mighty men*, that has diſabled them to ſtand, and overthrown them by one judgment after another, and ſo left them to be trampled upon by their proud conquerors, *ver.* 15. Nay, ſhe is as one in a wine-preſs, not only trodden down, but trodden to pieces, cruſhed as grapes in the wine-preſs of God's wrath, and her blood preſſed out as wine, and it is God that has thus *trodden the virgin, the daughter of Judah.* 6. She is in the hand of her enemies, and it is the Lord that has delivered her *into their hands*, ver. 14. *he has made my ſtrength to fall*, ſo that *I am not able to* make head againſt them; nay, not only not able to riſe up againſt them, but *not able to riſe up* from them, and then *he hath delivered me into their hands*; nay, *ver.* 15. *he hath called an aſſembly againſt me, to cruſh my young men*, and ſuch an aſſembly, as it is in vain to think of oppoſing; and again, *ver.* 17. *The Lord has commanded concerning Jacob, that his adverſaries ſhould be round about him.* He that had many a time *commanded deliverances for Jacob*, Pſalm xliv. 4. now commands an invaſion againſt Jacob, becauſe Jacob had diſobeyed the commands of his law.

3. She juſtly demands a ſhare in the pity and compaſſion of thoſe that were the ſpectators of her miſery, *ver.* 12. *Is it nothing to you, all ye that paſs by?* Can you look upon me without concern? What! are your hearts as adamants, and your eyes as marbles, that you cannot beſtow upon me one compaſſionate thought, or look, or tear? Are not you alſo in the body? Is it nothing to you that your neighbour's houſe is on fire? There are thoſe to whom Zion's ſorrows and ruins are nothing; they are not *grieved for the affliction of Joſeph.* How pathetically doth ſhe beg their compaſſion! *ver.* 18. *Hear, I pray you, all people, and behold my ſorrow:* Hear my complaints, and ſee what cauſe I have for them! This is a requeſt like that of *Job*, chap. xix. 21. *Have pity, have pity upon me, O ye my friends!* It helps to make a burthen ſit lighter, if our friends ſympathize with us, and mingle their tears with ours, for that is an evidence that, though we are in affliction, we are not in contempt, which is commonly as much dreaded in an affliction as any thing.

4. She juſtifies her own grief, though it was very extream, for theſe calamities, *ver.* 16. *For theſe things I weep*, I weep in the night, *ver.* 2. when none ſees, *mine eye, mine eye runs down with water.* Note, This world is a vale of tears to the people of God; Zion's ſons are often Zion's mourners; *Zion ſpreads forth her hands*, ver. 17. which is here an expreſſion rather of deſpair than of deſire; ſhe flings out her hands as giving all for gone. Let us ſee how ſhe accounts for this paſſionate grief. 1. Her God is withdrawn from her; and Micah, that had but gods of gold, when they were ſtolen from him, cried out, *What have I more? And what is this that ye ſay unto me? What aileth thee?* The church here grieves exceſſively, for, ſaith ſhe, *the comforter that ſhould relieve my ſoul is far from me*; God is the comforter, he uſed to be ſo to her, he only can adminiſter effectual comforts, it is his word that ſpeaks them, it is his Spirit that ſpeaks them to us: His are ſtrong conſolations, able to *relieve the ſoul*, to *bring it back* when it is gone, and we cannot of our ſelves *fetch it again*; but now he is departed in diſpleaſure, he is *far from me*, and beholds me *afar off*. Note, It is no marvel that the ſouls of the ſaints faint away, when God, who is the only comforter that can relieve them, keeps at a diſtance. 2. Her children are removed from her, and are in no capacity to help her; it is for them ſhe weeps, as Rachel for hers, *becauſe they were not*, and therefore ſhe *refuſeth to be comforted. Her children were deſolate, becauſe the enemy prevailed* againſt them, there is *none of all her ſons to take her by the hand*, Iſa. li. 18. they cannot help themſelves, and how ſhould they help her? Both the damſels and the youths, that were her joy and hope, *are gone into captivity*, ver. 18. It is ſaid of the Chaldeans, that they had *no compaſſion upon young men or maidens*, not on the fair ſex, not on the blooming age, 2 *Chron.* xxxvi. 17. 3. Her friends failed her, ſome would not, and others could not give her any relief. She *ſpread forth her hands*, as begging relief, but *there is none to comfort her*, ver. 17. none that can do it, none that cares to do it; ſhe *called* for her *lovers*, and, to engage them to help her, *called* them her *lovers*, but they *deceived* her, *ver.* 19. they proved like the *brooks in ſummer* to the thirſty *traveller*, Job vi. 15. Note, Thoſe creatures that we ſet our hearts upon, and raiſe our expectations from, we are commonly deceived and diſappointed in. Her idols were her lovers, Egypt and Aſſyria were her confidents, but they deceived her: Thoſe that made court to her in her proſperity, were ſhy of her, and ſtrange to her, in her adverſity. Happy they that have made God their friend, and keep themſelves in his love, for he will not deceive them! 4. Thoſe, whoſe office it was to guide her, were diſabled to do her any ſervice: The *prieſts* and the *elders*, that ſhould have appeared at the head of affairs, die for hunger, *ver.* 19. they *gave up the ghoſt*, or, were ready to expire, *while they ſought their meat*; went a begging for bread to keep them alive. *The famine* is *ſore* indeed *in the land*, when there is no bread to the wiſe, when prieſts and elders are ſtarved. The prieſts and elders ſhould have been her comforters, but how ſhould they comfort others, when they themſelves were comfortleſs? *They have heard that I ſigh*, which ſhould have ſummoned them to mine aſſiſtance, but *there is none to comfort.*

comfort me. Lover and friend haſt thou put far from me. 5. Her enemies were too hard for her, and then inſulted over her; they have *prevailed*, ver. 16. *Abroad the ſword bereaveth*, and ſlays all that comes in its way, and *at home* all proviſions are cut off by the beſiegers, ſo that *there is as death*, i. e. famine, which is as bad as the peſtilence, or worſe. *The ſword without, and terror within*, Deut. xxxii. 25. And as the enemies were very barbarous that were the inſtruments of the calamity, ſo were they that were the ſtanders by, the Edomites and Ammonites, that bore ill will to Iſrael, they have *heard of my trouble, and are glad that thou haſt done it*, ver. 21. they rejoice in the trouble it ſelf, they rejoice that it is God's doing, it pleaſeth them to find that God and his Iſrael are fallen out, and they carry it accordingly, with a great deal of ſtrangeneſs towards them: *Jeruſalem is as a menſtruous woman among them*, that they are afraid of touching, and are ſhy of, *ver.* 17. Upon all theſe accounts, it cannot be wondred at, nor can ſhe be blamed, that *her ſighs are many*, in grieving for what is, and *her heart is faint*, (ver. 22.) in fear of what is yet further likely to be.

5. She juſtifies God in all that is brought upon her, acknowledging that her ſins had deſerved theſe ſevere chaſtenings. The yoke that lies ſo heavy, and binds ſo hard, is *the yoke of her tranſgreſſions*, ver. 14. The fetters we are held in are of our own making, and it is with our own rod that we are beaten. When the church had ſpoken here, as if ſhe thought the Lord ſevere, ſhe doth well to correct her ſelf, at leaſt to explain her ſelf, by acknowledging, *ver.* 18. *The Lord is righteous:* He doth us no wrong in dealing thus with us, nor can we charge him with any injuſtice in it; how unrighteous ſoever men are, we are ſure *the Lord is righteous*, and manifeſts his juſtice, though they contradict all the laws of theirs. Note, Whatever our troubles are, which God is pleaſed to inflict upon us, we muſt own that therein he *is righteous*; we underſtand neither him nor our ſelves if we do not own it, 2 *Chron.* xii. 6. She owns the equity of God's actions, by owning the iniquity of her own, *I have rebelled againſt his commandments*, ver. 18. and again, *ver.* 20. *I have grievouſly rebelled.* We cannot ſpeak bad enough of ſin, and we muſt always ſpeak worſt of our own ſin, muſt call it *rebellion*, *grievous rebellion*; and very grievous ſin is to all true penitents. It is this that lies heavier upon her than the afflictions ſhe was under; *my bowels are troubled*, they work within me as the troubled ſea, *my heart is turned within me*, is reſtleſs, is turned upſide down, *for I have grievouſly rebelled.* Note, Sorrow for ſin muſt be great ſorrow, and muſt affect the ſoul.

6. She appeals both to the mercy and to the juſtice of God in her preſent caſe. 1. She appeals to the mercy of God concerning her own ſorrows, which had made her the proper object of his compaſſion, *ver.* 20. *Behold, O Lord, for I am in diſtreſs*; take cognizance of my caſe, and take ſuch order for my relief as thou pleaſeſt. Note, It is matter of comfort to us, that the troubles that oppreſs our ſpirits are open before God's eye. 2. She appeals to the juſtice of God concerning the injuries that her enemies did her, *ver.* 21, 22. *Thou wilt bring the day that thou haſt called*, the day that is fixed in the counſels of God, and publiſhed in the prophecies, when mine enemies, that now proſecute me, *ſhall be like unto me*, when the cup of trembling, now put into my hands, ſhall be put into theirs. It may be read as a prayer, Let the day appointed come, and ſo it goes on, *Let their wickedneſs come before thee*, let it come to be remembred, let it come to be reckoned for; take vengeance on them, for all the wrong they have done to me, *Pſalm* cix. 14, 15. haſten the time when thou wilt *do to them*, for their tranſgreſſion, *as thou haſt done to me* for mine. This prayer amounts to a proteſtation againſt all thoughts of a coalition with them, and to a prediction of their ruin, ſubſcribing to that which God had in his word ſpoken of it. Note, Our prayers may and muſt agree with God's word; and what day God has there called, we are to call for, and no other. And though we are bound in charity to forgive our enemies, and to pray for them, yet we may in faith pray for the accompliſhment of that which God has ſpoken againſt his and his church's enemies, that will not repent to give him glory.

CHAP. II.

This ſecond alphabetical elegy is ſet to the ſame mournful tune with the former, and the ſubſtance of it is much the ſame: It begins with Ecah, as that did, How ſad is our caſe! Alas! for us. 1. *Here is the anger of Zion's God taken notice of, as the cauſe of her calamities*, ver. 1,—9. 2. *Here is the ſorrow of Zion's children taken notice of, as the effect of her calamities*, ver. 10,—19. 3. *The complaint is made to God, and the matter referred to his compaſſionate conſideration*, ver. 20,—22. *The hand that wounded muſt make whole.*

1. HOW hath the LORD covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in his anger, *and* caſt down from heaven unto the earth the beauty of Iſrael, and remembred not his footſtool in the day of his anger?

2. The LORD hath ſwallowed up all the habitations of Jacob, and hath not pitied: he hath thrown down in his wrath the ſtrong holds of the daughter of Judah: he hath brought *them* down to the ground, he hath polluted the kingdom, and the princes thereof. 3. He hath cut off in *his* fierce anger all the horn of Iſrael: he hath drawn back his right hand from before the enemy, and he burned againſt Jacob like a flaming fire *which* devoureth round about. 4. He hath bent his bow like an enemy: he ſtood with his right hand as an adverſary, and ſlew all *that were* pleaſant to the eye, in the tabernacle of the daughter of Zion: he poured out his fury like fire. 5. The LORD was an enemy: he hath ſwallowed up Iſrael, he hath ſwallowed up all her palaces: he hath deſtroyed his ſtrong holds, and hath increaſed in the daughter of Judah mourning and lamentation. 6. And he hath violently taken away his tabernacle, as *if it were of* a garden, he hath deſtroyed his places of the aſſembly: the LORD hath cauſed the ſolemn feaſts and ſabbaths to be forgotten in Zion, and hath deſpiſed in the indignation of his anger the king and the prieſt. 7. The LORD hath caſt off his altar: he hath abhorred his ſanctuary: he hath given up into the hand of the enemy the walls of her palaces: they have made a noiſe in the houſe of the LORD, as in the day of a ſolemn feaſt. 8. The LORD hath purpoſed to deſtroy the wall of the daughter of Zion: he hath ſtretched out a line: he hath not withdrawn his hand from deſtroying: therefore he made the rampart and the wall to lament: they languiſhed together. 9. Her gates are ſunk into the ground: he hath deſtroyed and broken her bars: her king and her princes *are* among the Gentiles: the law *is* no *more*, her prophets alſo find no viſion from the LORD.

It is a very ſad repreſentation which is here made of the ſtate of God's church, of Jacob and Iſrael, of Zion and Jeruſalem, but the emphaſis in theſe verſes ſeems to be laid all along upon the hand of God in the calamities which they were groaning under. The grief is not ſo much that ſuch and ſuch things are done as that God has done them, that he appears angry with them; it is he that chaſtens them, and chaſtens them *in wrath*, and *in his hot diſpleaſure:* He is become their enemy and fights againſt them; and this, this is the wormwood and the gall in the affliction and the miſery.

1. Time was when God's delight was in his church, and he appeared to her, and appeared for her as a friend, but now his diſpleaſure is againſt her, he is angry with her, and appears and acts againſt her as an enemy. This is frequently repeated here, and ſadly lamented. What he has done, he has done *in his anger*, this makes the preſent day a melancholy day indeed with us, that it is *the day of his anger*, ver. 1. and again, *ver.* 2. it is *in his wrath*, and *ver.* 3. it is *in his fierce anger* that he has *thrown down* and *cut off:* and *ver.* 6. *in the indignation of his anger.* Note, To thoſe who know how to value God's favour nothing appears more dreadful than his anger; corrections in love are eaſily born, but rebukes in wrath wound deep. It is God's wrath that *burns againſt Jacob like a flaming fire*, ver. 3. and it is a conſuming fire, it *devours round about*, devours all her honours, all her comforts. This is the *fury that is poured out like fire*, ver. 4. like the fire and brimſtone which was rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah: but it was their ſin that kindled this fire. God is ſuch a tender father to his children, that we may be ſure he is never angry with them but when they provoke him, and give him cauſe to be angry; nor is he ever angry more than there is cauſe for. God's covenant with them was, that if they would *obey his voice*, he would be *an enemy to their enemies*, Exod. xxiii. 22. and he had been ſo, as long as they kept cloſe to him; but now he is an enemy to them; at leaſt he is *as an enemy*, ver. 5. He hath *bent his bow like an enemy*, ver. 4. He ſtood *with his right hand* ſtretched out againſt them, and a ſword drawn in it *as an adverſary.* God is not really an enemy to his people, no, not when he is angry with them, and corrects them in his anger. We may be ſorely diſpleaſed againſt our deareſt friends and relations, whom yet we are far from having an enmity to. But ſometime he is *as an enemy* to them, when all his providences concerning them ſeem, in outward appearance, to have a tendency to their ruin; when every thing makes againſt them, and nothing for them. But, bleſſed be God, Chriſt is *our peace*, our peacemaker, who hath ſlain the enmity, and in him we may *agree with our adverſary*, which it is our wiſdom to do, ſince it is in vain to contend with him, and he offers us advantageous conditions of peace.

2. Time was when God's church appeared very bright and illuſtrious, and conſiderable among the nations, but now *the Lord has covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud*, ver. 1. a dark cloud, which

which is very terrible to herſelf, and through which ſhe cannot ſee his face; *a thick cloud*, ſo the word ſignifies, a *black cloud*, which eclipſes all her glory, and conceals her excellency; not ſuch a cloud as that under which God conducted them through the wilderneſs, or that in which God took poſſeſſion of the temple, and filled it with his glory: No, that ſide of the cloud is now turned towards them which was turned towards the Egyptians in the red-ſea. The *beauty of Iſrael is now caſt down from heaven to the earth*, their princes, 2 *Sam.* i. 19. their religious worſhip, their beauty of holineſs, all that which recommended them to the affection and eſteem of their neighbours, and rendered them amiable, which had *lifted them up to heaven*, was now withered and gone; becauſe God had covered it with a cloud. He hath *cut off all the horn of Iſrael*, ver. 3. all her beauty and majeſty, *Pſal.* cxxxii. 17. all her plenty and fulneſs, and all her power and authority. They had, in their pride, lifted up their horn againſt God, and therefore juſtly will God *cut off their horn*; he diſabled them to reſiſt and oppoſe their enemies, he *turned back their right hand*, ſo that they were not able to follow the blow which they gave, nor to ward off the blow which was given them. What can their *right hand* do againſt the enemy, when God draws it back, and withers it, as he did Jeroboam's. Thus was the *beauty of Iſrael caſt down*, when a people famed for courage were not able to ſtand their ground. or make good their poſt.

3. Time was when Jeruſalem and the cities of Judah were ſtrong and well fortified, were truſted to by the inhabitants, and let alone by the enemy as impregnable; but now the Lord has in anger *ſwallowed them up*, they are quite gone, the forts and barriers are taken away, and the invaders meet with no oppoſition: the ſtately ſtructures that were their ſtrength and beauty are pulled down and laid waſte, (1.) The Lord hath in anger *ſwallowed up all the habitations of Jacob*, ver. 2. both the cities and country houſes, they are burnt, or otherwiſe deſtroyed, ſo totally ruined that they ſeem to have been *ſwallowed up*, and no remains left of them. He hath *ſwallowed up and hath not pitied*; one would have thought it pity that ſuch ſumptuous houſes, ſo well built, ſo well furniſhed, ſhould be quite deſtroyed; and that ſome pity ſhould have been had for the poor inhabitants that were thus diſlodged and driven to wander; but God's wonted compaſſions ſeemed to fail; *he hath ſwallowed up Iſrael*, as a lion ſwallows up his prey, *ver.* 5. (2.) He hath *ſwallowed up* not only her common habitations, but her *palaces*, all her *palaces*, the habitations of their princes and great men, *ver.* 5. though thoſe were moſt ſtately and ſtrong, and rich, and well guarded. God's judgments, when they come with commiſſion, level palaces with cottages, and as eaſily ſwallow them up. If palaces be polluted with ſin, as theirs were, let them expect to be viſited with a curſe, which ſhall *conſume them, with the timber thereof, and the ſtores thereof*, Zech. v. 4. (3.) He hath deſtroyed not only their dwelling places, but their *ſtrong holds*, their caſtles, citadels, and places of defence, theſe he hath *thrown down in his wrath*, and *brought them to the ground*; for ſhall they ſtand in the way of his judgments, and give check to the progreſs of them? No, let them drop like leaves in autumn, let them be razed to the foundations, and made to touch the *ground*, ver. 2. and again, *ver.* 5. *he hath deſtroyed his ſtrong holds*, for what ſtrength could they have againſt God? And thus hath he *increaſed in the daughter of Judah mourning and lamentation*, for they could not but be in a mighty conſternation when they ſaw all their defence departed from them. This is again inſiſted on *ver.* 7, 8, 9. In order to the *ſwallowing up of her palaces*, he hath *given up into the hand of the enemy the walls of her palaces*, which were their ſecurity, and when they are *broken down* the palaces themſelves are ſoon broken into. The *walls of palaces* cannot protect them, unleſs God himſelf be a wall of fire round about them. This God did *in his anger*, and yet he hath done it deliberately, it is the reſult of a previous purpoſe, and is done by a wiſe and ſteady providence; for the Lord hath *purpoſed to deſtroy the wall of the daughter of Zion*, he brought the Chaldean army in on purpoſe to do this execution. Note, Whatever deſolations God makes in his church, they are all according to his counſels; he *performeth the thing that is appointed for us*, even that which makes moſt againſt us. But when it is done, he hath *ſtretched out a line*, a meaſuring line to do it exactly and by meaſure: hitherto the deſtruction ſhall go and no further; no more ſhall be cut off than what is marked to be ſo. Or, it is meant of *the line of confuſion*, Iſa. xxxiv. 11. a levelling line; for he will go on with his work, he *hath not withdrawn his hand from deſtroying*, that right-hand which he ſtretched out againſt his people as *an adverſary*, ver. 4. as far as the purpoſe went the performance ſhall go, and his hand ſhall accompliſh his counſel to the utmoſt, and not be *withdrawn*. Therefore he made the *rampart and the wall*, which the people had rejoiced in, and upon which, perhaps, they had *made merry*, to *lament*, and they *languiſhed together*; the *walls and the ramparts*, or bulwarks upon them fell together, and were left to condole one another's fall. *Her gates* are gone in an inſtant, ſo that one would think they were ſunk into the ground with their own weight, and *he hath deſtroyed and broken her bars*, thoſe bars of Jeruſalem's gates which formerly *he had ſtrengthened*, Pſal. cxlvii. 13. Gates and bars will ſtand us in no ſtead when God hath withdrawn his protection.

4. Time was when their government flouriſhed, their princes made a figure, and their kingdom was great among the nations, and the balance of power was on their ſide, but now it is quite otherwiſe, *he hath polluted the kingdom and the princes thereof*, ver. 2. they had firſt polluted themſelves with their idolatries, and then God dealt with them as with polluted things, he threw them to the dunghil, the fitteſt place for them: He hath given up their glory, which was looked upon as ſacred, (that is a character we give to majeſty) to be trampled upon and profaned; and no marvel that the king and the prieſt, whoſe characters were always deemed venerable and inviolable, are deſpiſed by every body, when God has *in the indignation of his anger deſpiſed the king and the prieſt*, ver. 6. He hath abandoned them, looks upon them as no longer worthy of the honours conveyed to them by the covenants of royalty and prieſthood, but as having forfeited both, and then Zedekiah the king was uſed deſpitefully, and Seraiah the chief prieſt put to death as a malefactor. The crown is fallen from their heads, for *her king and her princes are among the Gentiles*, priſoners among them, inſulted over by them, *ver.* 9. and treated not only as common perſons, but as the baſeſt, without any regard had to their character. Note, It is juſt with God to debaſe thoſe by his judgments who have by ſin debaſed themſelves.

5. Time was when the ordinances of God were adminiſtred among them in their power and purity, and they had thoſe tokens of God's preſence with them, but now thoſe were taken from them, that part of the *beauty of Iſrael* was gone, which was indeed their greateſt beauty.

(1.) The ark was God's *footſtool*, under the *mercy-ſeat*, between the cherubims, this was of all other the moſt ſacred ſymbol of God's preſence, it is called his *footſtool*, 1 Chron. xxviii. 2. Pſal. xcix. 5. — cxxxii. 7. there the Shechinah reſted, and with an eye to this Iſrael was protected and ſaved many a time, but now he *remembred not his footſtool*, the ark itſelf was ſuffered, as it ſhould ſeem, to fall into the hands of the Chaldeans: God being angry threw that away, for it ſhall be no longer his footſtool, the earth ſhall be ſo, as it had been before the ark was, *Iſai.* lxvi. 1. Of what little value are the tokens of his preſence, when his preſence is gone! nor was this the firſt time that God gave his ark into captivity, *Pſal.* lxxviii. 61. God and his kingdom can ſtand without that footſtool.

(2.) They that miniſtred in holy things had been *pleaſant to the eye in the tabernacle of the daughter of Zion*, ver. 4. they had been *purer than ſnow, whiter than milk*, chap. iv. 7. none more pleaſant in the eyes of all good people than thoſe that did the ſervice of the tabernacle, but now theſe are ſlain, and their *blood mingled with their ſacrifices*: thus is the prieſt deſpiſed as well as the king. Note, When thoſe that were pleaſant to the eye in Zion's tabernacle are ſlain, God muſt be acknowledged in it, he has done it, and the *burning which the Lord has kindled muſt be bewailed* by the whole houſe of Iſrael, as in the caſe of Nadab and Abihu, *Lev.* x. 6.

(3.) The temple was God's tabernacle, as the tabernacle while that was in being is called *his temple*, Pſal. xxvii. 4. and this *he has violently taken away.* ver. 6. he hath plucked up the ſtakes of it, and cut the cords, it ſhall be no more a tabernacle, much leſs his; he has *taken it away*, as the keeper *of a garden* takes away his hovel, or ſhade, when he hath done with it, and has no more occaſion for it: he takes it down as eaſily, as ſpeedily, and with as little regret and reluctancy as if it were but a *cottage in a vineyard, and a lodge in a garden of cucumbers*, Iſa. i. 8. but a *booth which the keeper makes*, Job xxvii. 18. When men profane God's tabernacle, it is juſt with him to take it from them. God had juſtly refuſed to *ſmell in their ſolemn aſſemblies*, Amos v. 21. they had provoked him to withdraw from them, and then no marvel that he has *deſtroyed his places of the aſſembly*; what ſhould they do with the places when the ſervices were become an abomination? He hath now *abhorred his ſanctuary*, ver. 7. it has been defiled with ſin, that only thing which he hates, and for the ſake of that he abhors even his ſanctuary, which he had delighted in, and called *his reſt for ever*, Pſal. cxxxii. 14. Thus he had *done to Shiloh.* Now the enemies have made as great *a noiſe* of revelling and blaſpheming *in the houſe of the Lord*, as ever had been made with the temple ſongs and muſick *in the day of a ſolemn feaſt*, Pſal. lxxiv. 4. Some by the *places of the aſſembly*, ver. 6. underſtand not only the temple, but the ſynagogues and the ſchools of the prophets, which the enemy had *burnt up*, Pſal. lxxiv. 8.

(4.) The ſolemn feaſts and the ſabbaths had been carefully remembred, and the people conſtantly put in mind of them, but now the Lord hath *cauſed thoſe to be forgotten*, not only in the country, among thoſe that lived at a diſtance, but even in Zion itſelf; for there were none left to remember them, nor were the places left where they uſed to be obſerved. Now Zion was in ruins, no difference was made between ſabbath times and other times, every day was a day of mourning, ſo that all the *ſolemn feaſts were forgotten.* Note, It is juſt with God to deprive thoſe of the benefit and comfort of ſabbaths and ſolemn feaſts, who have not duly valued them, nor conſcientiouſly obſerved them, but have profaned them, which was one of the ſins that the Jews were often charged with. They that have *ſeen the days of the ſon of man*, and ſlighted

ſlighted them, may *deſire to ſee one of thoſe days*, and not *have them*, Luk. xvii. 22.

(5.) The altar that had ſanctified their gifts, is now caſt off, for God will no more accept their gifts, nor be honoured by their ſacrifices, *ver.* 7. The altar was *the table of the Lord*, but God will no longer keep houſe among them, neither feaſt them, nor feaſt with them.

(6.) They had been bleſt with prophets, and teachers of the law, but now *the law is no more*, ver. 9. it is no more read by the people, no more expounded by the ſcribes, the tables of the law are gone with the ark, the book of the law is taken from them, and the people are forbidden to have it. What ſhould they do with bibles that had made no better improvement of them when they had them? *Her prophets alſo find no viſion from the Lord*, God *anſwers them no more by prophets and dreams*, which was the melancholy caſe of Saul, 1 *Sam.* xxviii. 15. They had perſecuted God's prophets, and deſpiſed the viſions they had from the Lord, and therefore it is juſt with God to ſay they ſhall have no more prophets, no more viſions. Let them go to the prophets that had flattered and deceived them with viſions of their own hearts, for they ſhall have none from God to comfort them, or tell them *how long*. They that miſuſe God's prophets, juſtly loſe them.

10. The elders of the daughter of Zion ſit upon the ground *and* keep ſilence: they have caſt up duſt upon their heads; they have girded themſelves with ſackcloth; the virgins of Jeruſalem hang down their heads to the ground. 11. Mine eyes do fail with tears; my bowels are troubled; my liver is poured upon the earth, for the deſtruction of the daughter of my people, becauſe the children and the ſucklings ſwoon in the ſtreets of the city. 12. They ſay to their mothers, Where *is* corn and wine? when they ſwooned as the wounded in the ſtreets of the city, when their ſoul was poured out into their mothers boſom. 13. What thing ſhall I take to witneſs for thee? what thing ſhall I liken to thee, O daughter of Jeruſalem? what ſhall I equal to thee, that I may comfort thee, O virgin daughter of Zion? for thy breach *is* great like the ſea; who can heal thee? 14. Thy prophets have ſeen vain and fooliſh things for thee, and they have not diſcovered thine iniquity, to turn away thy captivity; but have ſeen for thee falſe burdens, and cauſes of baniſhment. 15. All that paſs by, clap *their* hands at thee; they hiſs and wag their head at the daughter of Jeruſalem, *ſaying*, *Is* this the city that *men* call the perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth? 16. All thine enemies have opened their mouth againſt thee: they hiſs and gnaſh the teeth: they ſay, We have ſwallowed *her* up: certainly this *is* the day that we looked for: we have found, we have ſeen *it*. 17. The LORD hath done *that* which he had deviſed: he hath fulfilled his word that he had commanded in the days of old: he hath thrown down, and hath not pitied: and he hath cauſed *thine* enemy to rejoice over thee, he hath ſet up the horn of thine adverſaries. 18. Their heart cried unto the LORD, O wall of the daughter of Zion, let tears run down like a river day and night: give thy ſelf no reſt, let not the apple of thine eyes ceaſe. 19. Ariſe, cry out in the night: in the beginning of the watches pour out thine heart like water before the face of the LORD: lift up thy hands towards him, for the life of thy young children, that faint for hunger in the top of every ſtreet. 20. ¶ Behold, O LORD, and conſider to whom thou haſt done this: ſhall the women eat their fruit, *and* children of a ſpan long? ſhall the prieſt and the prophet be ſlain in the ſanctuary of the LORD? 21. The young and the old lie on the ground in the ſtreets, my virgins and my young men are fallen by the ſword: thou haſt ſlain *them* in the day of thine anger, thou haſt killed *and* not pitied. 22. Thou haſt called as in a ſolemn day my terrors round about, ſo that in the day of the LORDs anger none eſcaped nor remained: thoſe that I have ſwaddled and brought up, hath mine enemy conſumed.

Juſtly are theſe called *Lamentations*, and they are very pathetical ones; the expreſſions of grief in perfection, mourning and wo, and nothing elſe, like the contents of Ezekiel's roll, *Ezek.* ii. 10.

1. Copies of lamentation are here preſented, and they are painted to the life. (1.) The judges and magiſtrates that uſed to appear in robes of ſtate, have laid them aſide, or rather are ſtripped of them, and put on the habit of mourners, *ver.* 10. the elders now ſit no longer in the judgment-ſeats, the *thrones of the houſe of David*, but they *ſit upon the ground*, having no ſeat to repoſe themſelves in, or in token of great grief, as Job's friends *ſat with him upon the ground*, Job ii. 13. They open not their mouth in the gate, as uſual, to give their opinion, but they *keep ſilence*, overwhelmed with grief, and not knowing what to ſay. They have *caſt duſt upon their heads, and girded themſelves with ſackcloth*, as deep mourners uſed to do; they had loſt their power and wealth, and that made them take on thus; *Ploratur lachrymis amiſſa pecunia veris.* (2.) The young ladies, that uſed to dreſs themſelves ſo richly, and *walk with ſtretched forth necks*, Iſa. iii. 16. now are humbled; *the virgins of Jeruſalem hang down their heads to the ground*, they are made to know ſorrow that ſeemed to bid defiance to it, and were always diſpoſed to be merry. (3.) The prophet himſelf is a pattern to the mourners, *ver.* 11. his *eyes do fail with tears*, i. e. he hath wept till he can weep no more, hath almoſt wept his eyes out, wept himſelf blind. Nor are the inward impreſſions of grief ſhort of the outward expreſſions, his *bowels are troubled*, as they were when he ſaw theſe calamities coming, *Jer.* iv. 19, 20. which, one would think, might have excuſed him now, but even he to whom they were no ſurprize, yet felt them an inſupportable grief, to that degree that his *liver is poured out on the earth*, i. e. he felt himſelf a perfect colliquation; all his entrails are melted and diſſolved, as *Pſal.* xxii. 14. Jeremiah himſelf had better treatment than his neighbours, better than he had had before from his own countrymen, nay, their deſtruction was his deliverance, their captivity his enlargement, the fame that made them priſoners made him a favourite, and yet his private intereſts are ſwallowed up in a concern for the publick, and he bewails the *deſtruction of the daughter of his people*, as ſenſibly as if he himſelf had been the greateſt ſufferer in that common calamity. Note, The judgments of God upon the land and nation are to be lamented by us, though we, for our parts, may eſcape pretty well.

2. Calls to lamentation are here given. *The heart of the people cried unto the Lord*, ver. 18. Some fear it was not a cry of true repentance, but of bitter complaint, their heart was as full of grief as it could hold, and they gave vent to it in doleful ſhreiks and outcries, in which they made uſe of God's name; yet we will charitably ſuppoſe that many of them did in ſincerity cry unto God for mercy in their diſtreſs; and the prophet bids them go on to do ſo; *O wall of the daughter of Zion*, either ye that ſtand upon the wall, ye *watchmen on the walls*, Iſa. lxii. 6. when ye ſee the enemies encamped about the walls, and making their approaches towards them, or *becauſe of the wall* (that is the ſubject of the lamentation) becauſe of the *breaking down of the wall*, which was not done till about a month after the city was taken, becauſe of this further calamity let *the daughter of Zion lament* ſtill. This was a thing which Nehemiah lamented long after, *Neh.* i. 3, 4; *Let tears run down like a river day and night*, weep without intermiſſion, give thy ſelf no reſt from weeping, *let not the apple of thine eye ceaſe*. This intimates, (1.) That the calamities would be continuing, and the cauſes of grief would frequently recur, and freſh occaſion would be given them every day and every night to bemoan themſelves. (2.) That they would be apt, by degrees, to grow inſenſible and ſtupid under the hand of God, and would need to be ſtill called upon to afflict their ſouls yet more and more till their proud hard hearts were throughly humbled and ſoftned.

3. Cauſes for lamentation are here aſſigned, and the calamities that are to be bewailed are very particularly and pathetically deſcribed.

(1.) Multitudes periſh by famine, a very ſore judgment, and piteous is the caſe of thoſe that fall under it. God had corrected them by ſcarcity of proviſions through want of rain ſome time before, *Jer.* xiv. 1. and they were not brought to repentance by that lower degree of this judgment, and therefore now by the ſtraitneſs of the ſiege God brought it upon them in extremity; for, 1. The children died for hunger in the mother's arms: *The children and ſucklings*, whoſe innocent and helpleſs ſtate entitles them to relief as ſoon as any, yet they *ſwoon in the ſtreets*, ver. 11. *as the wounded*, ver. 12. there being no food to be had for them, they that are ſtarved die as ſurely as they that are ſtabbed; they lie a great while crying to their poor mothers for corn to feed them, and wine to refreſh them, for they are ſuch as had been bred up to the uſe of wine, and wanted it now, but there is none for them, ſo that at length *their ſoul is poured out into the mother's boſom*, and there they breathe their laſt. This is mentioned again, *ver.* 19. *they faint for hunger in the top of every ſtreet*. Yet this is not the worſt, 2. There were ſome little children that were ſlain by their mothers hands and eaten, *ver.* 20. Such was the ſcarcity of proviſion that the *women eat the fruit* of their own bodies, even their children, when they were but of *five ſpan long*, according to the threatning, *Deut.* xxviii. 53. The like was done in the ſiege of Samaria, 2 *Kings* vi. 29. Such extremities, nay, ſuch barbarities were they brought to by the famine. Let us, in our abundance, thank God that we have food convenient, not only for ourſelves, but for our children.

(2.) Multitudes fall by the ſword, which devours one as well as another, eſpecially when it is in the hand of ſuch cruel enemies as the

the Chaldeans were. 1. They spared no character, no, not the most distinguished; even the *priest and the prophet*, who of all men, one would think, might expect protection from heaven and veneration on earth, yet *are slain*, not abroad in the field of battle, where they are out of their place, as Hophni and Phinehas, but in *the sanctuary of the Lord*, the place of their business, and which they hoped would have been a refuge to them. 2. They spared no age, no not those that by reason of their tender or their decrepit age, were exempted from taking up the sword, for even they *perished by the sword*, the young that were not yet come to bear arms, and the old that had their *quietus*, yet *lie on the ground slain in the streets*, till some kind hand is found that will bury them. 3. They spared no sex, *my virgins and my young men are fallen by the sword.* In the most barbarous military executions that ever we read of the virgins were spared, and made part of the spoil, *Numb.* xxxi. 28. *Judg.* v. 30. but here the virgins were put to the sword; as well as the young men. 4. This was the *Lord's doing*, he suffered the sword of the Chaldeans to devour thus without distinction, *Thou hast slain them in the day of thine anger*, for it is God that *kills and makes alive*, and saves alive, as he pleaseth. But that which follows is very harsh, *thou hast killed and not pitied*, for his soul is not *grieved for the misery of Israel.* The enemies that used them thus cruelly were such as he had both mustered and summoned, *ver.* 22. *Thou hast called in as in a solemn day my terrors round about*, i. e. the Chaldeans that are such a terror to me; enemies crowded into Jerusalem now as thick as ever worshippers used to do on a solemn festival; so that we were quite overpowered with numbers, and none escaped nor remained; Jerusalem was made a perfect slaughter-house. Mothers are cut to the heart to see those whom they have taken such care of, and pains with, and whom they have been so tender of, thus inhumanly used; suddenly cut off that were not so soon reared; *Those that I have swaddled and brought up hath mine enemy consumed*, as if they were brought forth for the murtherer, like lambs for the butcher, *Hos.* ix. 13. Zion that was a mother to them all, lamented to see those who were brought up in her courts, and under the tuition of her oracles, thus made a prey.

(3.) Their false prophets cheated them, *ver.* 14. This was a thing which Jeremiah had lamented long before, and had observed with a great concern, *Jer.* xiv. 13. *Ah, Lord God, the prophets say unto them, ye shall not see the sword*; and here he inserts it among his lamentations; *Thy prophets have seen vain and foolish things for thee*, they pretended to discover for thee, and then to discover to thee, the mind and will of God, to see *the visions of the Almighty*, and then to speak his words, but they were all vain and foolish things, their visions were all their own fancies, and if they thought they had any, it was only the product of a crazed head, or a heated imagination, as appeared by what they delivered, which was all idle and impertinent: nay, it is most likely they themselves knew the visions they pretended were counterfeit, and all a sham, and made use of only to colour that which they designedly imposed upon the people with, that they might make an interest in them for themselves; they are thy prophets, not God's prophets, he never sent them, nor were they pastors after his heart, but the people set them up, told them what they should say, so that they were prophets *after their hearts.* 1. Prophets should tell people of their faults, should shew them their sins, that they may bring them to repentance, and so prevent their ruin; but these prophets knew that would lose them the peoples affections and contributions, and knew they could not reprove their hearers without reproaching themselves at the same time, and therefore *they have not discovered thine iniquity*, they saw it not themselves, or if they did, saw so little evil in it, or danger by it, that they would not tell them of it, though that might have been a means, by taking away their iniquity, to turn away their captivity. 2. Prophets should warn people of the judgments of God coming upon them, but these *saw for them false burthens*, the messages they pretended to deliver to them from God, they knew to be false, and falsly ascribed to God; so that by soothing them up in carnal security they caused that banishment which by plain dealing they might have prevented.

(4.) Their neighbours laughed at them, *ver.* 15. *All that pass by thee clap their hands at thee.* Jerusalem had made a great figure, got a great name, and born a great sway among the nations, it was the envy and terror of all about; and when that city was thus reduced, they all (as men are apt to do in such a case) triumphed in its fall, *they hissed and wagged the head*, pleasing themselves to see how much it was fallen from its former pretensions; *Is this the city* (said they) *that men called the perfection of beauty?* Psal. l. 2. How is it now the perfection of deformity! Where is all its beauty now! *Is this the city that was called the joy of the whole earth!* Psal. xlviii. 2. which rejoiced in the gifts of God's bounty and grace, more than any other place, and which all the earth rejoiced in; where is all its joy now, and all its glorying? It is a great sin thus to make a jest of others miseries, and adds very much affliction to the afflicted.

(5.) Their enemies triumphed over them, *ver.* 16. Those that wished ill to Jerusalem and her peace, now vent their spite and malice, which before they concealed; they now *open their mouths*, nay, they widen them, they *hiss and gnash their teeth*, in scorn and indignation; they triumph in their own success against her, and the rich prey they have got in making themselves masters of Jerusalem. *We have swallowed her up*, it is our doing, and it is our gain, it is all our own now; Jerusalem shall never be either courted or feared as she has been; *certainly this is the day that we have* long *looked for, we have found it, we have seen it*; *Aha, so would we have it.* Note, The enemies of the church are apt to take its shocks for its ruins, and to triumph in them accordingly; but they will find themselves deceived; for *the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church.*

(6.) Their God in all this appeared against them, *ver.* 17. *The Lord hath done that which he had devised.* The destroyers of Jerusalem could have *no power against her, unless it were given them from above*; they are but the sword in God's hand, it is he that has *thrown down, and has not pitied*, i. e. in this controversy of his with us, we have not had the usual instances of his compassion towards us; *he hath caused thine enemy to rejoice over thee*; see *Job* xxx. 11. *he hath set up the horn of thine adversaries*, hath given them power and matter for pride; this is indeed the highest aggravation of the trouble, that God is become their enemy, and yet it is the strongest argument for patience under it; we are bound to submit to what God doth, for, 1. It is the performance of his purpose; *the Lord has done that which he had devised*; it is done with counsel and deliberation, not rashly, or upon a sudden resolve; it is the *evil that he has framed*, Jer. xviii. 11. and we may be sure it is framed so as exactly to answer the intention; what God deviseth against his people, is designed for them, and so it will be found in the issue. 2. It is the accomplishment of his predictions; it is the fulfilling of the scripture; he has now *put in execution his word that he had commanded in the days of old.* When he gave them his law by Moses, he told them what judgments he would certainly inflict upon them if they transgressed that law; and now they had been guilty of the transgression of this law, he had executed the sentence of it, according to *Lev.* xxvi. 16, &c. *Deut.* xxviii. 15. Note, In all the providences of God, concerning his church, it is good to take notice of the fulfilling of his word; for there is an exact agreement between the judgments of God's hand, and the judgments of his mouth; and when they are compared, they will mutually explain and illustrate each other.

4. Comforts for the cure of these lamentations are here sought for and prescribed. (1.) They are sought for and enquired after, *ver.* 13. The prophet seeks to find out some suitable, acceptable words to say to her in this case, *Wherewith shall I comfort thee, O virgin, daughter of Zion?* Note, We should endeavour to comfort those whose calamities we lament, and when our passions have made the worst of them, our wisdom should correct them, and labour to make the best of them; we should study to make our sympathies with our afflicted friends turn to their consolation. Now the two most common topicks of comfort in case of affliction are here tried, but are laid by, because they would not hold: We commonly endeavour to comfort our friends, by telling them, 1. That their case is not singular, nor without precedent, there are many whose trouble is greater, and lies heavier upon them than theirs doth; but Jerusalem's case will not admit this argument; *What thing shall I liken to thee*, or, *what shall I equal to thee, that I may comfort thee?* What city, what country is there whose case is parallel to thine? What witness shall I produce to prove an example that will reach thy present calamitous state? Alas, there is none! no sorrow like thine! because there is none whose honour was like thine. 2. We tell them, that their case is not desperate, but it may easily be remedied; but neither will that be admitted here, upon a view of human probabilities; for *thy breach is great, like the sea*, like the breach which the sea sometimes makes upon the land, which cannot be repaired, but still grows wider and wider. Thou art wounded, and *who shall heal thee?* No wisdom or power of man can repair the desolations of such a broken, shattered state. It is to no purpose therefore to administer any of these common cordials, therefore, (2.) The method of cure prescribed, is to address themselves to God, and, by a penitent prayer, to commit their case to him, and to be instant and constant in such prayers, *ver.* 19. *Arise*, out of thy dust, out of thy despondency, *cry out in the night*, watch unto prayer; when others are asleep, be thou upon thy knees, importunate with God for mercy; *in the beginning of the watches*, of each of the four watches of the night, let thine *eyes prevent* them, *Psal.* cxix. 148. then *pour out thine heart like water before the Lord*, be free and full in prayer, be sincere and serious in prayer, open thy mind, spread thy case before the Lord; *lift up thine hands towards him*, in holy desire and expectation; beg for *the life of thy young children*, these poor lambs, what have they done? 2 *Sam.* xxiv. 17. Take with you words, take with you these words, *ver.* 20. *Behold, O Lord, and consider to whom thou hast done this*, with whom thou hast dealt thus! Are they not thine own? the seed of Abraham thy friend, and of Jacob thy chosen? Lord, take their case into thy compassionate consideration! Note, Prayer is a salve for every sore, even the sorest; a remedy for every malady, even the most grievous. And our business in prayer is not to prescribe, but subscribe to the wisdom and will of God; to refer our case to him, and then leave it with him; *Lord, behold and consider*, and, *thy will be done.*

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

The ſcope of this chapter is the ſame with that of the two foregoing chapters, but the compoſure is ſomewhat different; that was in long verſe, this in ſhort; another kind of metre; that was in ſingle alphabets, this in a treble one. Here is, 1. *A ſad complaint of God's diſpleaſure, and the fruits of it,* ver. 1,—20. 2. *Words of comfort to God's people when they are in trouble and diſtreſs,* ver. 21,—36. 3. *Duty preſcribed in this afflicted ſtate,* ver. 37,—41. 4. *The complaint renewed,* ver. 42,—54. 5. *Encouragement taken to hope in God, and continue waiting for his ſalvation; with an appeal to his juſtice againſt the perſecutors of the church,* ver. 55,—63. *Some make all this to be ſpoken by the prophet himſelf, when he was impriſoned and perſecuted; but it ſeems rather to be ſpoken in the perſon of the church now in captivity, and in a manner deſolate; and in the deſolations of which the prophet did in a particular manner intereſt himſelf. But the complaints here are ſomewhat more general than thoſe in the foregoing chapter, being accommodated to the caſe as well of particular perſons, as of the publick; and intended for the uſe of the cloſet, rather than of the ſolemn aſſembly. Some think Jeremiah makes theſe complaints, not only as an interceſſor for Iſrael, but as a type of Chriſt, who was thought by ſome to be Jeremias, the weeping prophet, becauſe he was much in tears,* Matt. xvi. 14. *and to him many of the paſſages here may be applied.*

1. I *Am* the man *that* hath ſeen affliction by the rod of his wrath. 2. He hath led me and brought *me into* darkneſs, but not *into* light. 3. Surely againſt me is he turned, he turneth his hand *againſt me* all the day. 4. My fleſh and my ſkin hath he made old, he hath broken my bones. 5. He hath builded againſt me, and compaſſed *me* with gall and travel. 6. He hath ſet me in dark places, as *they that be* dead of old. 7. He hath hedged me about, that I cannot get out: he hath made my chain heavy. 8. Alſo when I cry and ſhout, he ſhutteth out my prayer. 9. He hath enclоſed my ways with hewn ſtone: he hath made my paths crooked. 10. He *was* unto me *as* a bear lying in wait, *and as* a lion in ſecret places. 11. He hath turned aſide my ways, and pulled me in pieces: he hath made me deſolate. 12. He hath bent his bow, and ſet me as a mark for the arrow. 13. He hath cauſed the arrows of his quiver to enter into my reins. 14. I was a deriſion to all my people, *and* their ſong all the day. 15. He hath filled me with bitterneſs, he hath made me drunken with wormwood. 16. He hath alſo broken my teeth with gravel-ſtones, he hath covered me with aſhes. 17. And thou haſt removed my ſoul far off from peace: I forgat proſperity. 18. And I ſaid, My ſtrength and my hope is periſhed from the LORD, 19. Remembring mine affliction and my miſery, the wormwood and the gall. 20. My ſoul hath *them* ſtill in remembrance, and is humbled in me.

The title of the cii. *Pſalm* might very fitly be prefixed to this chapter; *The prayer of the afflicted when he is overwhelmed, and pours out his complaint before the Lord*; for it is very feelingly and fluently that the complaint is here poured out: Let us obſerve the particulars of it.

1. The prophet complains that God is angry; this gives both birth and bitterneſs to the affliction, *ver.* 1. *I am the man,* the remarkable man, *that hath ſeen affliction,* and has felt it ſenſibly *by the rod of his wrath.* Note, God is ſometimes angry with his own people; yet it is to be complained of, not as a ſword to cut off, but only as a rod to correct; it is to them *the rod of his wrath,* a chaſtening which, though grievous for the preſent, will, in the iſſue, be advantageous. By this rod we muſt expect to *ſee affliction,* and if we be made to ſee more than ordinary affliction by that rod, we muſt not quarrel, for we are ſure the anger is juſt, and the affliction mild, and mixed with mercy.

2. That he is at a loſs, and altogether in the dark; darkneſs is put for great trouble and perplexity, the want both of comfort and of direction; this was the caſe of the complainant, *ver.* 2. *He hath led me,* by his providence, and an unaccountable chain of events, *into darkneſs, and not into light*; the darkneſs I feared, and not into the light I hoped for. And, *ver.* 6. *He hath ſet me in dark places,* dark as the grave, *like thoſe that be dead of old,* that are quite forgotten, no body knows who or what they were. Note, The Iſrael of God, though children of light, ſometimes *walk in darkneſs.*

3. That God appears againſt him as an enemy, as a profeſſed enemy. God had been for him, but now *ſurely againſt me is he turned,* ver. 3. as far as I can diſcern, for *his hand is turned againſt me all the day, I am chaſtened every morning,* Pſalm lxxiii. 14. And when God's hand is continually turned againſt us, we are tempted to think that his heart is turned againſt us too, God had ſaid once, *Hoſ.* v. 14. *I will be as a lion to the houſe of Judah,* and now he has made his word good, *ver.* 10. *He was unto me as a bear lying in wait,* ſurprizing me with his judgments, *and as a lion in ſecret places*; ſo that which way ſoever I went, I was in continual fear of being ſet upon, and could never think my ſelf ſafe. Do men ſhoot at thoſe they are enemies to? *He hath bent his bow,* the bow that was ordained againſt the church's perſecutors, that is bent againſt her ſons, *ver.* 12. *He hath ſet me as a mark for his arrow,* which he aims at, and will be ſure to hit, and then *the arrows of his quiver enter into my reins,* give me a mortal wound, an inward wound, *ver.* 13. Note, God has many arrows in his quiver, and they fly ſwift, and pierce deep.

4. That he is as one ſorely afflicted both in body and mind. The Jewiſh ſtate may now be fitly compared to a man wrinkled with age, for which there is no remedy, *ver.* 4. *My fleſh and my ſkin has he made old,* they are waſted and withered, and I look like one that were ready to drop into the grave; nay, *he has broken my bones,* and ſo diſabled me to help my ſelf, *ver.* 15. *He has filled me with bitterneſs,* a bitter ſenſe of theſe calamities. God has acceſs to the ſpirit, and can ſo imbitter that, as thereby to imbitter all the enjoyments; as when the ſtomach is foul, whatever is eaten ſours in it. *He has made me drunk with wormwood,* i. e. ſo intoxicated me with the ſenſe of my afflictions, that I know not what to ſay or do. *He hath* mingled *gravel* with my bread, ſo that *my teeth* are *broken* with it, *ver.* 16. and what I eat is neither pleaſant nor nouriſhing. *He hath covered me with aſhes,* as mourners uſe to be; or, as ſome read it, *he hath fed me with aſhes*; *I have eaten aſhes like bread,* Pſalm cii. 9.

5. That he is not able to diſcern any way of eſcape or deliverance, *ver.* 5. *He hath builded againſt me,* as forts and batteries are built againſt a beſieged city, where there was a way open, it is now quite made up; *he hath compaſſed me* on every ſide *with gall and travel,* i. e. I vex and fret, and tire my ſelf, to find a way of eſcape, but can find none, *ver.* 7. *He hath hedged me about that I cannot get out*; when Jeruſalem was beſieged, it is ſaid to be *compaſſed in on every ſide,* Luke xix. 43. I am chained, and, as ſome notorious malefactors are double fettered, and loaded with irons, ſo he *hath made my chain heavy*; and ſo, *ver.* 9. *He hath incloſed my ways with hewn ſtone,* not only hedged up my way *with thorns,* Hoſ. ii. 6. but ſtopped it up with a ſtone wall, which cannot be broken through, ſo that *my paths are made crooked,* i. e. I traverſe to and fro to the right hand, to the left, to try to get forward, but am ſtill turned back. Thoſe that walk in the crooked paths of ſin, croſſing God's laws, it is juſt with God to make them walk in the crooked paths of affliction, croſſing their deſigns, and breaking their meaſures. So, *ver.* 11. *he hath turned aſide my ways,* i. e. hath blaſted all my counſels, ruined my projects, ſo that I am neceſſitated to yield to my own ruin; he hath *pulled me in pieces,* he hath torn and gone away, *Hoſ.* v. 14. and hath *made me deſolate,* has deprived me of all ſociety, and all comfort in my own ſoul.

6. That God turns a deaf ear to his prayers, *ver.* 8. *When I cry and ſhout,* as one in earneſt, as one that would make him hear, yet he *ſhuts out my prayer,* and will not ſuffer it to have acceſs to him. God's ear uſeth to be open to the prayers of his people, and his door of mercy to them that knock at it, but now both are ſhut, even to one that *cries and ſhouts.* Thus ſometimes God ſeems to be angry, even againſt *the prayers of his people,* Pſalm lxxx. 5. and their caſe is deplorable indeed, when they are denied not only the benefit of an anſwer, but the comfort of acceptance.

7. That his neighbours make a laughing matter of his troubles, *ver.* 14. *I was a deriſion to all my people,* to all the wicked among them, that made themſelves and one another merry with the publick judgments, and particularly the prophet Jeremiah's griefs. I am their ſong, their neginath, or hand-inſtrument of muſick, their *tabret,* Job xvii. 6. that they play upon; as Nero on his harp, when Rome was on fire.

8. That he was ready to deſpair of relief and deliverance; thou haſt not only taken peace from me, but haſt *removed my ſoul far off from peace,* ver. 17. ſo that it is not only not within reach, but not within ken; *I forget proſperity*; it is ſo long ſince I had it, and ſo unlikely that I ſhould ever recover it, that I have loſt the idea of it; have been ſo inured to ſorrow and ſervitude, that I know not what joy and liberty mean. I have even given up all for gone, concluding, *my ſtrength and my hope is periſhed from the Lord,* ver. 18. *i. e.* I can no longer ſtay my ſelf upon God as my ſupport, for I do not find he gives me encouragement to do ſo; nor can I look for his appearing in my behalf, ſo as to put an end to my troubles, for the caſe ſeems remedileſs, and even my God inexorable. Without doubt, it was his infirmity to ſay thus, *Pſalm* lxxvii. 10. for with God there is *everlaſting ſtrength,* and he is his peoples never failing hope, whatever they may think.

9. That grief returned upon every remembrance of his troubles, and his reflections were as melancholy as his proſpects, *ver.* 19, 20. Did he endeavour, as Job did, to *forget his complaint?* Job ix. 27. alas! it was to no purpoſe, he remembers upon all occaſions *the affliction and the miſery, the wormwood and the gall*; thus emphatically doth he ſpeak of his affliction, for thus did he think

think of it, thus heavy did it lie when he reviewed it! It was an affliction that was misery it self; *my affliction and my transgression*, so some read it; my trouble, and my sin that brought it upon me; that was *the wormwood and the gall* in *the affliction and the misery*; it is sin that makes the cup of affliction a bitter cup. *My soul hath them still in remembrance.* The captives in Babylon had all the miseries of the siege in their mind continually, and the flames and ruins of Jerusalem still before their eyes, and *wept when* they *remembred Zion*; nay, they could *never forget Jerusalem*, Psalm cxxxvii. 1, 5. *my soul* having *them in remembrance is humbled in me*, not only oppressed with a sense of the trouble, but in bitterness for sin. Note, It becomes us to have humble hearts under humbling providences, and to renew our penitent humiliations for sin, upon every remembrance of our afflictions and miseries. Thus we may get good by former corrections, and prevent further.

21. This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. 22. ℸ *It is of* the LORDs mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. 23. *They are* new every morning: great *is* thy faithfulness. 24. The LORD *is* my portion, saith my soul, therefore will I hope in him. 25. The LORD *is* good unto them that wait for him, to the soul *that* seeketh him. 26. *It is* good that *a man* should both hope, and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD. 27. *It is* good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. 28. He sitteth alone, and keepeth silence, because he hath born *it* upon him. 29. He putteth his mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope. 30. He giveth *his* cheek to him that smiteth him, he is filled full with reproach. 31. For the LORD will not cast off for ever. 32. But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies. 33. For he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. 34. To crush under his feet all the prisoners of the earth, 35. To turn aside the right of a man before the face of the most High, 36. To subvert a man in his cause, the LORD approveth not.

Here the clouds begin to scatter, and the sky to clear up; the complaint was very melancholy in the former part of the chapter, and yet here the tune is altered, and the mourners in Zion begin to look a little pleasant. But for hope heart would break. To save the heart from being quite broken, here is something *called to mind*, which gives ground for *hope*, ver. 21. which refers to what comes after, not to what goes before. This that follows, *I make to return to my heart*, so the margin words it; what we have had in our hearts, and have laid to our hearts, is sometimes as if it were quite lost and forgotten, till God by his grace make it to return to our hearts, that it may be ready to us when we have occasion to use it. *I recall it to mind, therefore have I hope*, and am kept from downright despair.

Let us see what these things are which he *calls to mind*.

1. That as bad as things are, it is owing to the mercy of God that they are not worse. We are *afflicted by the rod of his wrath*, but, *it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed*, ver. 22. When we are in distress, we should, for the encouragement of our faith and hope, observe what makes for us, as well as what makes against us. Things are bad, but they might have been worse, and therefore there is hope they may be better. Observe here, 1. The streams of mercy acknowledged, *we are not consumed.* Note, The church of God is like Moses's bush burning, yet *not consumed*; whatever hardships it has met with, or may meet with, it shall have a being in the world to the end of times. It is *persecuted* of men, *but not forsaken* of God, and therefore, though it is *cast down*, it is *not destroyed*, 2 Cor. iv. 9. corrected, yet *not consumed*; refined in the furnace as silver, but *not consumed* as dross. 2. These streams followed up to the fountain. *It is of the Lord's mercies.* Here are mercies in the plural number, noting the abundance and variety of those mercies; God is an inexhaustible *fountain of mercy*, *the Father of mercies.* Note, We all owe it to the sparing mercy of God *that we are not consumed*; others have been consumed round about us, and we our selves have been in the consuming, and yet *we are not consumed*; we are out of the grave, we are out of hell. Had we been dealt with *according to our sins*, we had been consumed long ago, but we have been dealt with *according to God's mercies*, and we are bound to acknowledge it to his praise.

2. That even in the depth of their affliction they still have experience of the tenderness of the divine pity, and the truth of the divine promise. They had several times complained that God had not pitied, *chap.* ii. 17, 21. but here they corrected themselves, and own, 1. That *God's compassions fail not*; they do not really fail, no not then when in anger he seems to have *shut up his tender mercies.* These rivers of mercy run fully and constantly, but never run dry: No, *they are new every morning*, i. e. every morning we have fresh instances of God's compassion towards us; he visits us with them *every morning*, Job vii. 18. *every morning doth he bring his judgment to light*, Zeph. iii. 5. When our comforts fail, yet God's compassions do not. 2. That *great is his faithfulness.* Though the covenant seemed to be broken, they own that it still continues in full force; and though Jerusalem be in ruins, *the truth of the Lord endures for ever.* Note, Whatever hard things we suffer, we must never entertain any hard thoughts of God, but must still be ready to own that he is both kind and faithful.

3. That God is, and ever will be, the all-sufficient happiness of his people, and they have chosen him, and depend upon him to be so, *ver.* 24. *The Lord is my portion, saith my soul*; that is, 1. When I have lost all I have in the world, liberty and livelihood, and almost life it self, yet I have not lost my interest in God. Portions on earth are perishing things, but God is a *portion for ever.* 2. While I have an interest in God, therein I have enough; I have that which is sufficient to balance all my troubles, and make up all my losses. Whatever we are robbed of, our portion is safe. 3. That is that which I depend upon, and rest satisfied with; *therefore will I hope in him:* I will stay my self upon him, and encourage my self in him, when all other supports and encouragements fail me. Note, It is our duty to make God the portion of our souls, and then to make use of him as our portion, and to take the comfort of it in the midst of our lamentations.

4. That those who deal with God will find it is not in vain to trust in him; for, 1. He is good to those that do so, *ver.* 25. He is good to all, *his tender mercies are over all his works*, all his creatures taste of his goodness, but he is in a particular manner *good to them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him.* Note, While trouble is prolonged, and deliverance is deferred, we must patiently wait for God, and his gracious returns to us; while we *wait for him* by faith, we must *seek him* by prayer; our *souls* must *seek him*, else we do not seek so as to find; our seeking will help to keep up our waiting; and to those who thus wait and seek, God will be gracious, he will shew them his *marvellous loving kindness.* 2. They that do so will find it good for them, *ver.* 26. *It is good*, it is our duty, and will be our unspeakable comfort and satisfaction, *to hope, and quietly to wait for the salvation of the Lord.* To hope that it will come, though the difficulties that lie in the way of it seem insupportable; to wait till it doth come, though it be long delayed; and while we wait to be quiet and silent, not quarrelling with God, or making our selves uneasy, but acquiescing in the divine disposals: *Father, thy will be done.* If we call this to mind, we may have hope that all will end well at last.

5. That afflictions are really good for us, and if we bear them aright, will work very much for our good. It is not only good to hope and wait for the salvation, but it is good to be under the trouble in the mean time, *ver.* 27. *It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.* Many of the young men were carried into captivity, and to make them easy in it, he tells them it was good for them to *bear the yoke* of that captivity, and they would find it so, if they would but accommodate themselves to their condition, and labour to answer God's ends in laying that heavy yoke upon them. It is very applicable to the yoke of God's commands; *it is good for* young people to take that yoke upon them *in their youth*; we cannot begin too soon to be religious; it will make our duty the more acceptable to God, and easy to our selves, if we engage in it when we are young. But here it seems to be meant of the yoke of affliction; many have found it good to bear this in youth, it has made them humble and serious, and has weaned them from the world, who otherwise would have been proud and unruly, and *as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke.* But when do we *bear the yoke* so as that it is really *good for us to bear it in our youth?* He answers, in the following verses, 1. When we are sedate and quiet under our afflictions; when we *sit alone, and keep silence*; do not run to and fro into all companies with our complaints, aggravating our calamities, and quarrelling with the disposals of providence concerning us, but retire into privacy, that we may *in a day of adversity consider*, *sit alone*, that we may converse with God, and *commune with our own hearts*, silencing all discontented, distrustful thoughts, and laying our hand upon our mouth, as Aaron, who, under a very severe trial, held his peace. We must keep silence under the yoke, as those that have born it upon us, not wilfully pulled it upon our own necks, but patiently submitted to it, when God laid it upon us. When those that are afflicted in their youth, accommodate themselves to their afflictions, fit their necks to the yoke, and study to answer God's end in afflicting them, then they will find it good for them to bear it, for it yields *the peaceable fruit of righteousness* to those who are thus *exercised thereby.* 2. When we are humble and patient under our affliction; he gets good by the yoke that *puts his mouth in the dust*, not only *lays his hand upon his mouth*, in token of submission to the will of God in the affliction, but *puts it in the dust*, in token of sorrow and shame, and self-lothing, at the remembrance of sin, and as one perfectly reduced and reclaimed, and brought, as those that are vanquished, to *lick the dust*, Psalm lxxii. 9. And we must thus humble our selves, *if so be there may be hope*, or, as it is in the original, *peradventure there is hope.* If there be any way to acquire and secure a good hope under our afflictions, it is this way, and yet we must be very modest in our expectations of it, must look

look for it with an, *it may be*, as thoſe that own our ſelves utterly unworthy of it. Note, Thoſe that are truly humbled for ſin, will be glad to obtain a good hope, through grace, upon any terms, though they *put their mouth in the duſt* for it; and thoſe that would have hope muſt do ſo, and aſcribe it to free grace if they have any encouragements, which may keep their hearts from ſinking into the duſt when they put their mouth there. 3. When we are meek and mild towards thoſe that are the inſtruments of our trouble, and are of a forgiving ſpirit, *ver.* 30. He gets good by the yoke that *giveth his cheek to him that ſmiteth him*, and rather *turns the other cheek* (Matt. v. 39.) than returns the ſecond blow. Our Lord Jeſus has left us an example of this, for he *gave his back to the ſmiters*, Iſa. l. 6. He that can bear contempt and reproach, and not *render railing for railing*, and bitterneſs for bitterneſs; that, when he is *filled full with reproach*, keeps it to himſelf, and doth not retort it, and empty it again upon thoſe that filled him with it, but *pours it out before the Lord* (as thoſe did, *Pſalm* cxxiii. 4. whoſe *ſouls were exceedingly filled with the contempt of the proud*) he ſhall find *it good to bear the yoke*, and that it ſhall turn to his ſpiritual advantage. The ſum is, *If tribulation work patience*, that patience will work experience, and that experience a *hope that maketh not aſhamed.*

6. That God will graciouſly return to his people with ſeaſonable comforts, *according to the time that he has afflicted them*, ver. 31, 32. Therefore the ſufferer is thus penitent, thus patient, becauſe he believes that God is gracious and merciful, which is the great inducement both to evangelical repentance, and to chriſtian patience. We may bear up our ſelves with this, 1. That when we are caſt down, yet we are not caſt off; the father's correcting his ſon is not a diſinheriting of him. 2. That though we may ſeem to be caſt off for a time, while ſenſible comforts are ſuſpended, and deſired ſalvations deferred, yet we are not really caſt off, becauſe not *caſt off for ever*; the controverſy with us ſhall not be perpetual. 3. That whatever ſorrow we are in, it is what God has allotted us, and his hand is in it: It is he that cauſeth grief, and therefore we may be ſure it is ordered wiſely and graciouſly; and it is but *for a ſeaſon*, and when need is, that we *are in heavineſs*, 1 Pet. i. 6. 4. That God has compaſſions and comforts in ſtore, even for thoſe whom he hath himſelf grieved; we muſt be far from thinking that though God cauſe grief, the world will relieve and help us; *no*, the very ſame that cauſed the grief, muſt bring in the favour, or we are undone; *una eademque manus vulnus opemque tulit*; he hath torn, and he will heal us, *Hoſ.* vi. 1. 5. That when God returns to deal graciouſly with us, it will be not according to our merits, but according to his mercies, *according to the multitude*, the abundance *of his mercies*. So unworthy we are, that nothing but an abundant mercy will relieve us! and from that what may we not expect? And God's cauſing our grief ought to be no diſcouragement at all to thoſe expectations.

7. That when God doth cauſe grief it is for wiſe and holy ends, and he takes not delight in our calamities, *ver.* 33. He doth indeed *afflict* and *grieve the children of men*, all their grievances and afflictions are from him, but he doth not do it *willingly*, not *from the heart*, ſo the word is, *i. e.* 1. He never afflicts us but when we give him cauſe to do it; he doth not diſpenſe his frowns as he doth his favours, *ex mero motu*; if he ſhew us kindneſs, it is becauſe *ſo it ſeemeth good* unto him; but if he write bitter things againſt us, it is becauſe we both deſerve it, and need it. 2. He doth not afflict with pleaſure; he delights not in the death of ſinners, or the diſquiet of ſaints, but puniſheth with a kind of reluctancy; he comes out of his place to puniſh, for his place is the mercy-ſeat: He delights not in the miſery of any of his creatures, but for his own people he is ſo far from it, that in all their afflictions he is afflicted, and his ſoul is grieved for the miſery of Iſrael. 3. He retains his kindneſs for his people even then when he afflicts them: If he doth not *willingly grieve the children of men*, much leſs his own children; however it be, yet *God is good* to them, *Pſalm* lxxiii. 1. and they may by faith ſee love in his heart, even then when they ſee frowns in his face, and a rod in his hand.

8. That though he makes uſe of men as his hand, or rather inſtruments in his hand, for the correcting of his people, yet he is far from being pleaſed with the injuſtice of their proceedings, and the wrong they do them, *ver.* 34, 35, 36. Though God ſerves his own purpoſes by the violence of wicked and unreaſonable men, yet it doth not therefore follow that he countenanceth that violence, as his oppreſſed people are ſometimes tempted to think, *Hab.* i. 13. *Wherefore lookeſt thou upon them that deal treacherouſly?* Two ways the people of God are injured and oppreſſed by their enemies, and the prophet here aſſures us, that God doth not approve of either of them. 1. If men injure them by force of arms, God *doth not approve* of that: He doth not himſelf *cruſh under his feet the priſoners of the earth*, but he regards the cry of the priſoners; nor doth he approve of mens doing it; nay, he is much diſpleaſed with it. It is barbarous to trample on them that are down, and to cruſh thoſe that are bound, and cannot help themſelves. 2. If men injure them under colour of law, and in the pretended adminiſtration of juſtice; if they *turn aſide the right of a man*, ſo that he cannot diſcover what his rights are, or cannot come at them, they are out of his reach; if they *ſubvert a man in his cauſe*, and bring in a wrong verdict, or give a falſe judgment; let them know, (1.) That God ſees them: It is *before the face of the moſt High*, ver. 35. it is in his ſight, under his eye, and is very diſpleaſing to him, they cannot but know it is ſo, and therefore it is in defiance of him that they do it: He is *the moſt High*, whoſe authority over them they contemn, by abuſing their authority over their ſubjects; not conſidering that *he that is higher than the higheſt regardeth*, Eccl. v. 8. (2.) That God *doth not approve* of them, more is implied than is expreſſed; the perverting of juſtice, and the ſubverting of the juſt, is a great affront to God; and though he may make uſe of this for the correction of his people, yet he will, ſooner or later, ſeverely reckon with thoſe that do thus. Note, However God may for a time ſuffer evil doers to proſper, and ſerve his own purpoſes by them, yet he doth not therefore approve of their evil doings. Far be it from God that he ſhould do iniquity, or countenance thoſe that do it.

37. ¶ Who *is* he *that* ſaith, and it cometh to paſs, *when* the LORD commandeth *it* not? 38. Out of the mouth of the moſt High proceedeth not evil and good? 39. Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the puniſhment of his ſins? 40. Let us ſearch and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD. 41. Let us lift up our heart with *our* hands unto God in the heavens.

That we may be entitled to the comforts adminiſtred to the afflicted in the foregoing verſes, and may taſte the ſweetneſs of them, we have here the duties of an afflicted ſtate preſcribed to us, in the performance of which we may expect thoſe comforts.

1. We muſt ſee and acknowledge the hand of God in all the calamities that befal us at any time, whether perſonal or publick, *ver.* 37, 38. This is here laid down as a great truth, which will help to quiet our ſpirits under our afflictions, and to ſanctify them to us, 1. That whatever mens actions are, it is God that overrules them: *Who is he that ſaith, and it cometh to paſs*, i. e. that deſigns a thing, and brings his deſigns to effect, if *the Lord commandeth it not?* Men can do nothing but according to the counſel of God, nor have any power or ſucceſs but what is given them from above. *A man's heart deviſeth his way*, he projects and purpoſeth, he ſaith he will do ſo and ſo, *Jam.* iv. 13. *but the Lord directeth his ſteps*, far otherwiſe than he deſigned them, and what he contrived and expected doth not *come to paſs*, unleſs it be what God's hand and his counſel had determined before to be done, *Prov.* xvi. 9. *Jer.* x. 23. The Chaldeans ſaid they would deſtroy Jeruſalem, and it came to paſs, not becauſe they ſaid it, but becauſe God commanded it, and commiſſioned them to do it. Note, Men are but tools, which the great God makes uſe of, and manageth as he pleaſeth, in the government of this lower world; and they cannot accompliſh any of their deſigns without him. 2. That whatever mens lot is, it is God that orders it: *Out of the mouth of the moſt High doth not evil and good proceed?* Yes, certainly it doth; and it is more emphatically expreſſed in the original. *Doth not this evil, and this good, proceed out of the mouth of the moſt High?* Is it not what he has ordained and appointed for us? Yes, certainly it is; and for the reconciling of us to our own afflictions, whatever they be, this general truth muſt thus be particularly applied. This comfort I receive *from the hand of God, and ſhall I not receive* that *evil* alſo, as Job argues, *chap.* ii. 10. Are we healthful or ſickly? rich or poor? do we ſucceed in our deſigns? or are we croſſed in them? it is all what God ordereth; *every man's judgment proceedeth from him: The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away*; he forms the light, and creates the darkneſs, as he did at firſt. Note, All the events of divine providence are the products of a divine counſel; whatever is done God has the directing of it, and the works of his hands agree with the words of his mouth; *he ſpeaks, and it is done*; ſo eaſily, ſo effectually, are all his purpoſes fulfilled!

2. We muſt not quarrel with God for any affliction that he lays upon us at any time, *ver.* 39. *Wherefore doth a living man complain?* The prophet here ſeems to check himſelf for the complaints he had made in the former part of the chapter, wherein he ſeemed to reflect upon God as unkind and ſevere. Do I well to be angry? Why do I fret thus? Thoſe who in their haſte have chidden with God, muſt, in the reflection, chide themſelves for it. From the doctrine of God's ſovereign and univerſal providence, which he had aſſerted in the verſes before, he draws this inference, *Wherefore doth a living man complain?* What God doth we muſt not open our mouths againſt, *Pſalm* xxxix. 9. They that blame their lot, reproach him that allotted it to them. The ſufferers in the captivity, muſt ſubmit to the will of God in all their ſufferings. Note, Though we may pour out our complaints before God, we muſt never exhibit any complaints againſt God. What! ſhall *a living man complain, a man for the puniſhment of his ſins?* The reaſons here urged are very cogent. 1. We are men, let us herein ſhew our ſelves men. Shall *a man complain?* and again, *a man!* We are men, and not brutes, reaſonable creatures, that ſhould act with reaſon, that ſhould look upwards, and look forwards, and both ways may fetch conſiderations enow to ſilence our complaints. We are men, and not children, that cry for every thing that hurts

hurts them; we are men, and not gods, ſubjects, not lords, are not our own maſters, not our own carvers, we are bound and muſt obey, muſt ſubmit; we are men, and not angels, and therefore cannot expect to be free from troubles, as they are; we are not inhabitants of that world where there is no ſorrow, but this where there is nothing but ſorrow; we are men, and not devils, are not in that deplorable, helpleſs, hopeleſs ſtate that they are in, but have ſomething to comfort our ſelves with which they have not. 2. We are living men; through the good hand of our God upon us we are alive yet, though dying daily; and ſhall *a living man complain?* No, he has more reaſon to be thankful for life, than to complain of any of the burthens and calamities of life. Our lives are frail, and forfeited, and yet we are alive; now *the living, the living they* ſhould *praiſe*, and not complain, *Iſa.* xxxviii. 19. while there is life there is hope, and therefore, inſtead of complaining that things are bad, we ſhould encourage our ſelves with hopes that they will be better. 3. We are ſinful men, and that which we complain of is the juſt *puniſhment of our ſins*; nay, it is far leſs than our iniquities have deſerved; we have little reaſon to complain of our trouble, for it is our own doing, we may thank our ſelves, our own wickedneſs corrects us, *Prov.* xix. 3. no reaſon to quarrel with God, for he is righteous in it, he is the governor of the world, and it is neceſſary he ſhould maintain the honour of his government, by chaſtiſing the diſobedient. Are we ſuffering for our ſins? then let us not complain, for we have other work to do, inſtead of repining, we muſt be repenting; and, as an evidence that God is reconciled to us, we muſt be endeavouring to reconcile our ſelves to his holy will. Are we *puniſhed for our ſins?* it is our wiſdom then to ſubmit, and to kiſs the rod, for if we ſtill walk contrary to God, he will puniſh us yet ſeven times more, for *when he judgeth he will overcome*; but if we accommodate our ſelves to him, though we be *chaſtened of the Lord*, we ſhall not be *condemned with the world.*

3. We muſt ſet our ſelves to anſwer God's intention in afflicting us, which is to bring ſin to our remembrance, and to bring us home to himſelf, *ver.* 40. Theſe are the two things which our afflictions ſhould put us upon. 1. A ſerious conſideration of our ſelves, and a reflection upon our lives paſt. *Let us ſearch and try our ways*, ſearch what they have been, and then try whether they have been right and good, or no; ſearch as for a malefactor in diſguiſe, that flies and hides himſelf, and then try whether guilty or not guilty: Let conſcience be employed, both to ſearch and to try, and let it have leave to deal faithfully, to accompliſh a diligent ſearch, and to make an impartial trial: *Let us try our ways*, that by them we may try our ſelves, for we are to judge of our ſtate, not by our faint wiſhes, but by our ſteps; not by one particular ſtep, but by our ways; the ends we aim at, the rules we go by, and the agreeableneſs of the temper of our minds, and the tenor of our lives to thoſe ends, and thoſe rules. When we are in affliction it is ſeaſonable to *conſider our ways*, Hag. i. 5. that what is amiſs may be repented of, and amended for the future, and ſo we may anſwer the intention of the affliction. We are apt in times of publick calamity to reflect upon other peoples ways, and lay blame upon them, whereas our buſineſs is to *ſearch and try our* own *ways*, we have work enough to do at home; we muſt each of us ſay, What have I done? What have I contributed to the publick flames? that we may each of us mend one, and then we ſhould all be mended. 2. A ſincere converſion to God; let us *turn again to the Lord*, to him who is turned againſt us, and whom we have turned from; to him let us turn by repentance and reformation, as to our Owner and Ruler: We have been with him, and it has never been well with us ſince we forſook him, let us therefore now turn again to him. This muſt accompany the former, and be the fruit of it; therefore we muſt *ſearch and try our ways*, that we may turn from the evil of them to God; this was the method David took, *Pſalm* cxix. 59. *I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy teſtimonies.*

4. We muſt offer up our ſelves to God, and our beſt affections and ſervices, in the flames of devotion, *ver.* 41. When we are in affliction, 1. We muſt look up to God, as a *God in the heavens*, infinitely above us, and that has an inconteſtable dominion over us; for *the heavens do rule*, and is therefore not to be quarrelled with, but ſubmitted to. 2. We muſt pray to him, with a believing expectation to receive mercy from him; for that is implied in our *lifting up our hands* to him, a geſture commonly uſed in prayer, and ſometimes put for it, as, *Pſalm* cxli. 2. *Let the lifting up of my hands be acceptable in thy ſight*; it ſignifies our requeſting mercy from him, and our readineſs to receive that mercy. 3. Our hearts muſt go along with our prayers; we muſt *lift up our hearts with our hands*, as we muſt pour out our ſouls with our words: It is the heart that God looks at in that and every other ſervice; for what will a ſacrifice without a heart avail? If inward impreſſions be not in ſome meaſure anſwerable to outward expreſſions, we do but mock God, and deceive our ſelves. Praying is lifting up the ſoul to God, *Pſalm* xxv. 1. as to *our Father in heaven*; and the ſoul that hopes to be with God in heaven for ever, will thus, by frequent acts of devotion, be ſtill learning the way thither, and preſſing forward in that way.

42. We have tranſgreſſed and have rebelled, thou haſt not pardoned. 43. Thou haſt covered with anger, and perſecuted us: thou haſt ſlain, thou haſt not pitied. 44. Thou haſt covered thy ſelf with a cloud, that *our* prayers ſhould not paſs through. 45. Thou haſt made us *as* the off-ſcouring and refuſe in the midſt of the people. 46. All our enemies have opened their mouths againſt us. 47. Fear and a ſnare is come upon us, deſolation and deſtruction. 48. Mine eye runneth down with rivers of water, for the deſtruction of the daughter of my people. 49. Mine eye trickleth down, and ceaſeth not, without any intermiſſion: 50. Till the LORD look down, and behold from heaven. 51. Mine eye affecteth mine heart, becauſe of all the daughters of my city. 52. Mine enemies chaſed me ſore like a bird, without cauſe. 53. They have cut off my life in the dungeon, and caſt a ſtone upon me. 54. Waters flowed over mine head, *then* I ſaid, I am cut off.

It is eaſier to chide our ſelves for complaining, than to chide our ſelves out of it; the prophet had owned that a living man ſhould not complain, as if he checked himſelf for his complaints in the former part of the chapter, and yet here the clouds return after the rain, and the wounds bleed afreſh; for great pains muſt be taken with a troubled ſpirit to bring it into temper.

(1.) They confeſs the righteouſneſs of God in afflicting them; *ver.* 42. *We have tranſgreſſed and have rebelled.* Note, It becomes us when we are in trouble to juſtify God, by owning our ſins, and laying the load upon our ſelves for them; call ſin a tranſgreſſion, call it a rebellion, and we do not miſcall it; this is the reſult of their ſearching and trying their ways; the more they enquired into them, the worſe they found them.

(2.) Yet they complain of the afflictions they are under, not without ſome reflections upon God, which we are not to imitate, but under the ſharpeſt trials muſt always think and ſpeak highly and kindly of him.

1. They complain of his frowns, and the tokens of his diſpleaſure againſt them. Their ſins were repented of, and yet, *ver.* 42. *thou haſt not pardoned*; they had not the aſſurance and comfort of the pardon; the judgments brought upon them for their ſins were not removed, and therefore they thought they could not ſay the ſin was pardoned, which was a miſtake, but a common miſtake with the people of God, when their ſouls are caſt down, and diſquieted within them. Their caſe was really piteous, yet they complain, *thou haſt not pitied*, ver. 43. Their enemies perſecuted and ſlew them, but that was not the worſt of it, they were but the inſtruments in God's hand; *thou haſt perſecuted us, and thou haſt ſlain us*, though we expected thou ſhouldſt have protected and delivered us. They complain, that there was a wall of partition between them and God, and, 1. This hindered God's favours from coming down upon them; the reflected beams of God's kindneſs to them uſed to be the beauty of Iſrael, but now *thou haſt covered* us *with anger*, ſo that our glory is concealed and gone; now God is angry with us, and we do not appear that illuſtrious people that we have formerly been thought to be: Or, *thou haſt covered us* up, as men that are buried are covered up and forgotten. 2. It hindered their prayers from coming up unto God, *ver.* 44. *Thou haſt covered thy ſelf with a cloud*, not like that bright cloud in which he took poſſeſſion of the temple, which enabled the worſhippers to draw near to him, but like that in which he came down upon mount Sinai, which obliged the people to ſtand at a diſtance; this cloud is ſo thick, *that our prayers* ſeem as if they were loſt in it, they cannot *paſs through*, we cannot obtain an audience. Note, The prolonging of troubles is ſometimes a temptation, even to praying people, to queſtion whether God be, what they have always believed him to be, a prayer-hearing God.

2. They complain of the contempt of their neighbours, and the reproach and ignominy they were under, *ver.* 45. *Thou haſt made us as the off-ſcouring*, or ſcrapings of the firſt floor, which are thrown to the dunghil. This St. Paul refers to, in his account of the ſufferings of the apoſtles, 1 *Cor.* iv. 13. *We are made as the filth of the world, and are the off-ſcouring of all things.* We are the *refuſe*, or droſs, *in the midſt of the people*, trodden upon by every body, and looked upon as the vileſt of the nations, and good for nothing but to be caſt out as *ſalt* which *has loſt its ſavour.* And, *ver.* 46. *Our enemies have opened their mouths againſt us*, have *gaped upon us as roaring lions*, to ſwallow us up; or made mouths at us; or have taken liberty to ſay what they pleaſe of us; theſe complaints we had before, *chap.* ii. 15, 16. Note, It is common for baſe and ill-natured men to run upon, and run down, thoſe that are fallen into the depths of diſtreſs, from the height of honour. But this they brought upon themſelves by ſin; if they had not made themſelves vile, their enemies could not have made them ſo; but therefore *men call them reprobate ſilver, becauſe the Lord has rejected them*, for rejecting him.

3. They complain of the lamentable deſtruction that their enemies made of them, *ver.* 47. *Fear and a ſnare is come upon us*; the enemies

enemies have not only terrified us with those alarms, but prevailed against us by their stratagems, and surprized us with the ambushes they laid for us; and then follows nothing but *desolation and destruction*, the *destruction of the daughter of my people*, ver. 48. *of all the daughters of my city*, ver. 51. The enemies having taken some of them, *like a bird* in a snare; *chased* others, as a harmless bird is chased by a bird of prey, *ver.* 52. *Mine enemies chased me sore like a bird*, which is beaten from bush to bush, as Saul hunted David *like a partridge*. Thus restless was the enmity of their persecutors, and yet causeless, they have done it *without cause*, without any provocation given them; though God was righteous, they were unrighteous. David often complains of those that *hated him without cause*, and such are the enemies of Christ and his church, *John* xv. 25. Their enemies chased them till they had quite prevailed over them, *ver.* 53. *They have cut off my life in the dungeon.* They have shut up their captives in close and dark prisons, where they are as it were cut off *from the land of the living*, as, *ver.* 6. or, the state and kingdom is sunk and ruined, the life and being of it is gone, and it is as it were thrown into the dungeon or grave, and a *stone cast upon it*, such as used to be *rolled to the door of the sepulchres*. They look upon the Jewish nation as dead and buried, and that there is no possibility of its resurrection. Thus Ezekiel saw it in vision *a valley full of dead and dry bones*. Their destruction is compared, not only to the burying of a dead man, but to the sinking of a living man into the water, who cannot long be a living man there, *ver.* 54. *Waters* of affliction *flowed over mine head*, the deluge prevailed and quite overwhelmed them, the Chaldean forces broke in upon them, *as the breaking forth of waters*, which rose so high as to *flow over their heads*; they could not wade, they could not swim, and therefore must unavoidably sink. Note, The distresses of God's people sometimes prevail to that degree, that they cannot find any footing for their faith, nor keep their head above water, with any comfortable expectation.

4. They complain of their own excessive grief and fear upon this account. 1. The afflicted church is drowned in tears, and the prophet for her, *ver.* 48, 49. *Mine eye runs down with rivers of water*, so abundant was their weeping! *it trickleth down, and ceaseth not*, so constant was their weeping! *without* any *intermission*, there being no relaxation of their miseries: The distemper was in continual extremity, and they had no better day. It is added, *ver.* 51. *Mine eye affecteth mine heart*; my seeing eye affects my heart; the more I look upon the desolations of the city and country, the more I am grieved; which way soever I cast mine eye, I see that which renews my sorrow, even *because of all the daughters of my city*, i. e. all the neighbouring towns, which were as daughters to Jerusalem, the mother city. Or, *my weeping eye affects my heart*; the venting of the grief, instead of easing it, did but increase and exasperate it. Or, *mine eye melteth my soul*, i. e. I have quite wept away my spirits; not only *mine eye is consumed with grief, but my soul and my life is spent with it*, Psalm xxxi. 9, 10. Great and long grief exhausts the spirits, and brings not only many a *gray head*, but many a green head too *to the grave*. I weep, saith the prophet, *more than all the daughters of my city*, so the margin reads it; he outdid even those of the tender sex in the expressions of grief: And it is no diminution to any to be much in tears for the sins of sinners, and the sufferings of saints; our Lord Jesus was so; for *when he came near he beheld* this same *city, and wept over it*, which the daughters of Jerusalem did not. 2. She is overwhelmed with fears; not only grieves for what is, but fears worse, and gives up all for gone, *ver.* 54. *Then I said, I am cut off*, ruined, and see no hope of recovery; I am as one dead. Note, Those that are cast down, are commonly tempted to think themselves cast off, *Psalm* xxxi. 22. *Jonah* ii. 4.

5. In the midst of these sad complaints here is one word of comfort, by which it appears that their case was not altogether so bad as they made it, *ver.* 50. We continue thus weeping *till the Lord look down, and behold from heaven.* This intimates, 1. That they were satisfied God's gracious regard to them in their miseries, would be an effectual redress of all their grievances. If God, who now *covers himself with a cloud*, as if he took no notice of our troubles, (*Job* xxii. 13.) would but shine forth, all would be well; if he look upon us, *we shall be saved*, Psalm lxxx. 19. Dan. ix. 17. As bad as the case is, one favourable look from heaven will set all to rights. 2. That they had hopes he would at length look graciously upon them, and relieve them; nay, they take it for granted that he will; though he contend long, he will not contend for ever, though we deserve he should. 3. That while they continued weeping, they continued waiting; and neither did, nor would, expect relief and succour from any hand but his; nothing shall comfort them but his gracious returns, nor shall any thing wipe tears from their eyes *till he look down.* Their eyes, which now *run down with water*, shall still *wait upon the Lord their God until that he have mercy upon them*, Psalm cxxiii. 2.

55. ¶ I called upon thy name, O LORD, out of the low dungeon. 56. Thou hast heard my voice; hide not thine ear at my breathing, at my cry. 57. Thou dreweſt near in the day *that* I called upon thee: thou saidst, Fear not. 58. O LORD, thou hast pleaded the causes of my soul, thou hast redeemed my life. 59. O LORD, thou hast seen my wrong, judge thou my cause. 60. Thou hast seen all their vengeance, *and* all their imaginations against me. 61. Thou hast heard their reproach, O LORD, *and* all their imaginations against me. 62. The lips of those that rose up against me; and their device against me all the day. 63. Behold their sitting down and their rising up, I *am* their musick. 64. Render unto them a recompence, O LORD, according to the work of their hands. 65. Give them sorrow of heart, thy curse unto them. 66. Persecute and destroy them in anger, from under the heavens of the LORD.

We may observe throughout this chapter a struggle in the prophet's breast between sense and faith, fear and hope, he complains and then comforts himself, yet drops his comforts, and returns again to his complaints, as *Psal.* xlii. But as there, so here, faith gets the last word, and comes off a conqueror, for in these verses he concludes with some comfort. And here are two things with which he comforts himself.

1. His experience of God's goodness, even in his affliction. This may refer to the prophet's personal experience, with which he encourageth himself in reference to the publick troubles. He that has seasonably succour'd particular saints will not fail the church in general. Or it may include the remnant of good people that were among the Jews, who had found it was not in vain to wait upon God. In three things the prophet and his pious friends had found God good to them. 1. He had *heard their prayers*; though they had been ready to fear that the cloud of wrath was such as their *prayers could not pass through*, ver. 44. yet upon second thoughts, or at least upon further trial, they find it otherwise, and that God had not said unto them, *seek ye me in vain.* When they were *in the low dungeon*, as *free among the dead*, they *call'd upon God's name*, ver. 55. their weeping did not hinder praying. Note, though we are cast into never so *low a dungeon*, we may from thence find a way of access to God in the highest heavens; *Out of the depths have I cried unto thee*, Psal. cxxx. 1. as *Jonah* out of the whale's belly. And could God hear them out of the low dungeon? and would he? Yes, he did. *Thou hast heard my voice*; and some read the following words as carrying on the same thankful acknowledgment, *thou didst not hide thine ear at my breathing, at my cry*; and the original will bear that reading. We read it as a petition for further audience, *hide not thine ear.* God's having heard our voice when we *cried to him*, even out of *the low dungeon*, is an encouragement to us to hope that he will not at any time *hide his ear.* Observe how he calls prayer, *his breathing*; for in prayer we breath towards God, we breath after him; though we be but weak in prayer, cannot cry aloud, but only *breath* in *groanings that cannot be uttered*, yet we shall not be neglected, if we be sincere. Prayer is the breath of the new man, sucking in the air of mercy in petitions, and returning it in praises; it is both the evidence and the maintenance of the spiritual life: Some read it, at my gasping, when I lay gasping for life, and ready to expire, and thought I was breathing my last, then thou tookest cognizance of my distressed case. 2. He had silenced their fears, and quieted their spirits; ver. 57. *thou dreweſt near in the day that I called upon thee*; i. e. thou didst graciously assure me of thy presence with me, and give me to see thee nigh unto me, whereas I had thought thee to be at a distance from me. Note, When we draw nigh to God in a way of duty we may by faith see him drawing nigh to us in a way of mercy; but this was not all, thou saidst, fear not. This was the language of God's prophets preaching to them not to fear, *Isa.* xli. 10, 13. of his providence preventing those things which they were afraid of, and of his grace quieting their minds and making them easy, by the witness of his Spirit with their spirits, that they were his people still, though in distress, and therefore ought not to fear. 3. He had already begun to appear for them, ver. 58. *O Lord, thou hast pleaded the causes of my soul*, that is, as it follows, *thou hast redeemed my life*, hast rescued that out of the hands of those which would have taken it away, hast saved that when it was ready to be swallowed up, hast given me that for a prey. And this is an encouragement to them to hope that he would yet further appear for them; *thou hast delivered my soul from death*, and therefore wilt deliver *my feet from falling*; hast *pleaded the causes of my life*, and therefore wilt plead my other causes.

2. He comforts himself with an appeal to God's justice, and (in order to the sentence of that) to his omniscience.

1. He appeals to God's knowledge of the matter of fact, how very spiteful and malicious his enemies were, ver. 59. *O Lord thou hast seen my wrong*, that I have done no wrong at all, but suffer a great deal. He that knows all things knew, 1. the malice they had against him; *thou hast seen all their vengeance*; how they desire to do me a mischief, as if it were by way of reprisal for some great injury I had done them. Note, We should consider to our terror and caution, that God knows all the revengeful thoughts we have in our minds against others, and therefore not allow of those thoughts nor harbour them: and that he knows all the revengeful thoughts

thoughts others have cauſeleſly in their minds againſt us, and therefore not to be afraid of them, but leave it to him to protect us from them. 2. The deſigne and projects they had laid to do him a miſchief. *Thou haſt ſeen all their imaginations againſt me*, ver. 60. and again, *ver.* 61. *Thou haſt heard all their imaginations againſt me*, both the deſire and the device they have to ruin me, whether it ſhew itſelf in word or deed it is known to thee; nay, though the products of it are not to be ſeen or heard, yet their device againſt me all the day is perceived and underſtood by him to whom all things are naked and open. Note, The moſt ſecret contrivances of the church's enemies are perfectly known to the church's God, from whom they can hide nothing. 3. The contempt and calumny wherewith they loaded him, all that they ſpoke ſlightly of him, and all that they ſpoke reproachfully. Thou haſt heard their reproach, ver. 61. all the ill characters they give me, laying to my charge things that I know not, all the methods they uſe to make me odious and contemptible, even the *lips of thoſe that roſe up againſt me*, ver. 62. the contumelious language they uſe whenever they ſpeak of me; and that at their ſitting down and riſing up, when they lie down at night and get up in the morning, when they ſit down to their meat, and with their company, and when they riſe from both, ſtill I am their muſick, they make themſelves and one another merry with my miſeries, as the Philiſtines made ſport with Sampſon; Jeruſalem was the tabret they plaid upon; perhaps they had ſome tune, or play, ſome opera or interlude that was called the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, which though in the nature of a tragedy was very entertaining to thoſe who wiſh'd ill to the holy city. Note, God will one day call ſinners to an account for all the hard ſpeeches, which they have ſpoken againſt him and his people, *Jude* 15.

2. He appeals to God's judgment upon this fact, *Lord, thou haſt ſeen my wrong*, there's no need of any evidence to prove it, or any proſecutor to enforce and aggravate it, thou ſeeſt it in its true colours, and now I leave it with thee, *judge thou my cauſe*, ver. 59. Let them be dealt with, 1. as they deſerve, ver. 64. *Render to them a recompence, according to the work of their hands*, i. e. Let them be dealt with as they have dealt with us: Let thy hand be againſt them as their hand hath been againſt us. They have created us a great deal of vexation, now, Lord, *give them ſorrow of heart*, ver. 65. perplexity of heart, ſo ſome read it, let them be ſurrounded with threatning miſchiefs on all ſides, and not be able to ſee their way out; deſpondency of heart, ſo others read it, let them be driven to deſpair, and give themſelves up for gone; God can entangle the head that thinks itſelf cleareſt, and ſink the heart that thinks itſelf ſtouteſt. 2. Let them be dealt with according to the threatnings. *Thy curſe unto them*, i. e. let thy curſe come upon them, all the evils that are pronounc'd in thy word againſt the enemies of thy people, ver. 65. They have loaded us with curſes. as they loved curſing, ſo let it come unto them, thy curſe which will make them truly miſerable: Theirs is cauſeleſs, and therefore fruitleſs, it ſhall not come, but thine is juſt, and ſhall take effect; thoſe whom thou curſeſt are curſed indeed. Let the curſe he executed, ver. 66. *Perſecute and deſtroy them in anger*, as they perſecute and deſtroy us in their anger. *Deſtroy them from under the heavens of the Lord*, let them have no benefit of the light and influence of the heavens. Deſtroy them in ſuch a manner as that all that ſee it may ſay, it is a deſtruction from the Almighty, who *ſits in the heavens and laughs at them*, Pſal. ii. 4. and may own *that the heavens do rule*, Dan. iv. 26. what is ſaid of the idols is here ſaid of their worſhippers, who in this alſo ſhall be like unto them, *they ſhall periſh from under theſe heavens*, Jer. x. 11. They ſhall not only be excluded from the happineſs of the inviſible heavens, but cut off from the comfort even of theſe viſible ones; which are the *heavens of the Lord*, Pſal. cxv. 16. and which they therefore are unworthy to be taken under the protection of, that rebel againſt him.

CHAP. IV.

This chapter is another ſingle alphabet of Lamentations for the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, like thoſe in the two firſt chapters. 1. *The prophet here laments the injuries and indignities done to thoſe that reſpect uſed to be ſhewed to*, ver. 1. 2. 2. *He laments the direful effects of the famine, which they were reduced to by the ſiege*, ver. 3,—10. 3. *He laments the taking and ſacking of Jeruſalem, and its amazing deſolations*, ver. 11, 12. 4. *He acknowledgeth that the ſins of their leaders were the cauſe of all theſe calamities*, ver. 13,—16. 5. *He gives up all as doomed to utter ruin, for their enemies were quite too hard for them*, ver. 17,—20. 6. *He foretels the deſtruction of the Edomites who triumphed in Jeruſalem's fall*, ver. 21. 7. *He foretels the return of the captivity of Zion at laſt*, ver. 22.

1. HOW is the gold become dim! *how* is the moſt fine gold changed! the ſtones of the ſanctuary are poured out in the top of every ſtreet. 2. The precious ſons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, how are they eſteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter! 3. Even the ſea-monſters draw out the breaſt, they give ſuck to their young ones: the daughter of my people *is become* cruel, like the oſtriches in the wilderneſs. 4. The tongue of the ſucking child cleaveth to the roof of his mouth for thirſt: the young children ask bread, *and* no man breaketh *it* unto them. 5. They that did feed delicately, are deſolate in the ſtreets: *they that were* brought up in ſcarlet, embrace dunghills. 6. For the puniſhment of the iniquity of the daughter of my people, is greater then the puniſhment of the ſin of Sodom, *that was* overthrown as in a moment, and no hands ſtayed on her. 7. Her Nazarites were purer than ſnow, they were whiter than milk, they were more ruddy in body then rubies, their poliſhing *was* of ſapphire. 8. Their viſage is blacker then a coal: they are not known in the ſtreets: their skin cleaveth to their bones: it is withered, it is become like a ſtick. 9. *They that be* ſlain with the ſword, are better than *they that be* ſlain with hunger: for theſe pine away, ſtricken through for *want of* the fruits of the field. 10. The hands of the pitiful women have ſodden their own children, they were their meat in the deſtruction of the daughter of my people. 11. The LORD hath accompliſhed his fury, he hath poured out his fierce anger, and hath kindled a fire in Zion, and it hath devoured the foundations thereof. 12. The kings of the earth, and all the inhabitants of the world would not have believed, that the adverſary and the enemy ſhould have entred into the gates of Jeruſalem.

The elegy in this chapter begins with a lamentation of the very ſad and doleful change which the judgments of God had made in Jeruſalem: The city that had been *as gold*, as *the moſt fine gold*, ſo rich and ſplendid, *the perfection of beauty, and the joy of the whole earth* is become dim, and is changed, has loſt its luſtre, loſt its value, is not what it was, it is become droſs. Alas, what an alteration is here!

1. The temple is laid waſte, which was the glory of Jeruſalem, and its protection, that is given up into the hands of the enemy. And ſome underſtand the gold ſpoken of, *ver.* 1. to be the *gold of the temple*, the fine gold with which it was overlaid, 1 *Kings* vi. 22. when the temple was burned the gold of it was ſmoked and ſullied, as if it had been of little value, it was thrown among the rubbiſh, it *was changed*, i. e. converted to common uſes, and made nothing of. *The ſtones of the ſanctuary*, which were curiouſly wrought, were brought down by the Chaldeans when they demoliſhed it, or were thrown down by the force of fire, and were *poured out*, and thrown about in the *top of every ſtreet*, they lay mingled, without diſtinction, among the common ruins. When the God of the ſanctuary was, by ſin, provoked to withdraw, no wonder that the ſtones of the ſanctuary were thus profaned.

2. The princes and prieſts that were in a ſpecial manner the *ſons of Zion*, were trampled upon and abuſed, *ver.* 2. Both the houſe of God and the houſe of David were in Zion, the ſons of both thoſe houſes were upon that account precious, that they were heirs to the privileges of thoſe two covenants, of prieſthood and royalty; they were comparable to *fine gold*, Iſrael was more rich in them than in treaſures of gold and ſilver; but now they are eſteemed as *earthen pitchers*; they are broken as *earthen pitchers*, thrown by as veſſels in which there is no pleaſure. They are grown poor and brought into captivity, and thereby are rendered mean and deſpicable, and every one treads upon them and inſults over them. Note, The contempt put upon God's people ought to be matter of lamentation to us.

3. Little children were ſtarved for want of bread and water, *ver.* 3, 4. The nurſing-mothers having no meat for themſelves had no milk for the babes at their breaſt, ſo that though in diſpoſition they were really compaſſionate, yet in fact they ſeemed to be cruel, *like the oſtriches in the wilderneſs, that leave their eggs in the duſt*, Job xxxix. 14, 15. having no food for their children they were forced to neglect them, and do what they could to forget them, becauſe it was a pain to them to think of them when they had nothing for them; in this they were worſe than the ſeals, or ſea-monſters, or *whales*, as ſome render it, for they *drew out the breaſt and gave ſuck to their young*, which *the daughter of my people* will not do. Children cannot ſhift for themſelves as grown people can, and therefore it was the more piteous to ſee *the tongue of the ſucking-child cleave to the roof of his mouth for thirſt*, becauſe there was not a drop of water to moiſten it: and to hear the young children that could but juſt ſpeak, *ask bread* of their parents, who had none to give them, no, nor any friend that could ſupply them. As doleful as our thoughts are of this caſe, ſo thankful ſhould our thoughts be of the great plenty we enjoy, and the food convenient we have for our ſelves and for our children, and for *thoſe of our own houſe*.

4. Perſons of good rank were reduced to extreme poverty, *ver.* 5. They that were well-born, and well-bred, and had been accuſtomed to the

the beſt, both for food and cloathing, that had *fed delicately*, had every thing that was curious and nice, (they call it eating well, where-as thoſe only eat well that eat to the glory of God) and *fared ſumptuouſly every day*; they had not only been *advanc'd to the ſcarlet*, but from the beginning were *brought up in ſcarlet*, and were never acquainted with any thing mean or ordinary; they were *brought up upon ſcarlet*, ſo the word is, their foot-cloths and the carpets they walk'd on were ſcarlet, yet theſe being ſtript of all by the war, are *deſolate in the ſtreets*, have not a houſe to put their head in, not a bed to lie on, nor clothes to cover them, nor fire to warm them. They *embrace dunghils*, on them they are glad to lie, to get a little reſt; and perhaps raked in the dunghils for ſomething to eat, as the prodigal ſon that *would fain have filled his belly with the husks*. Note, Thoſe who live in the greateſt pomp and plenty know not what ſtraits they may be reduced to before they die; as ſometimes the *needy* are *raiſed out of the dunghil*, Pſal. cxiii. 7. ſo there are inſtances of the *wealthy* being brought *to the dunghil*. *They that were full have hired out themſelves for bread*, 1 Sam. ii. 5. It is therefore the wiſdom of thoſe that have abundance not to uſe themſelves too nicely, for then hardſhips when they come will be doubly hard, *Deut.* xxviii. 56.

5. Perſons that were eminent for dignity, nay, perhaps, for ſanctity, ſhared with others in the common calamity, *ver.* 7, 8. *Her Nazarites* are extremely changed. Some underſtand it only of her honourable ones, the young gentlemen that were very clean and neat and well dreſſed, waſhed and perfumed; but I ſee not why we may not underſtand it of thoſe devout people among them, that *ſeparated themſelves to the Lord* by the *Nazarites* vow, *Numb.* vi. 2. That there were ſuch among them in the moſt degenerate times, appears *Amos* ii. 11. *I raiſed up of your young men for Nazarites*; theſe *Nazarites*, though they were not to cut their hair, yet by reaſon of their temperate diet, their frequent waſhings, and eſpecially the pleaſure they had in devoting themſelves to God, and converſing with him, which made their faces to ſhine as *Moſes*'s, were *purer than ſnow*, and *whiter then milk*; drinking no wine nor ſtrong drink they had a more healthful complexion, and chearful countenance than thoſe that regaled themſelves daily with the blood of the grape, as *Daniel* and his fellows with *pulſe and water*. Or, it may note that great reſpect and veneration which all good people had for them; though perhaps to the eye they had *no form or comelineſs*, yet being ſeparated to the Lord, they were valued as if they had been *more ruddy than rubies*, *and their poliſhing had been of ſapphire*. But now *their viſage is marred*, as is ſaid of Chriſt, *Iſa.* lii. 14. it is *blacker than a coal*, they look miſerably, partly through huuger, and partly through grief and perplexity, *they are not known in the ſtreets*, they that reſpected them now take no notice of them, and they that had been intimately acquainted with them now ſcarce knew them, their countenance was ſo altered, by the miſeries that attended the long ſiege. *Their skin cleaves to their bones*, their fleſh being quite conſumed and waſted away; it is *withered*, it is *become like a ſtick*, as dry and hard as a piece of wood. Note, It is a thing to be much lamented that even thoſe who are ſeparated to God, yet when deſolating judgments are abroad are many times involved with others in the common calamity.

6. *Jeruſalem* comes down ſlowly, and dies a lingring death, for the famine contributes more to her deſtruction than any other judgment whatſoever. Upon this account the deſtruction of *Jeruſalem* was *greater than that of Sodom*, ver. 6. for that was *overthrown in a moment*, one ſhower of fire and brimſtone diſpatched it, *no hand ſtayed on her*, ſhe did not endure any long ſiege, as Jeruſalem has done, ſhe fell immediately into the *hands of the Lord*, who ſtrikes home at a blow, and did not *fall into the hands of man*, who being weak is long in doing execution, *Judg.* viii. 21. Jeruſalem is kept many months upon the rack in pain and miſery, and dies by inches, dies ſo as to feel her ſelf die. And when the iniquity of Jeruſalem is more aggravated than that of Sodom, no wonder that the puniſhment of it is ſo. Sodom never had the means of grace that Jeruſalem had, the oracles of God, and his prophets, and therefore the condemnation of Jeruſalem will be *more intolerable* than that of Sodom, *Mat.* xi. 23, 24.

The extremity of the famine is here ſet forth by two frightful inſtances of it. 1. The tedious death that it was the cauſe of, *ver.* 9. many were ſlain with hunger, were famiſhed to death, their ſtores being ſpent, and the publick ſtores ſo near ſpent, that they could not have any relief out of them; they were *ſtricken through for want of the fruits of the field*, they that were ſtarved were as ſure to die as if they had been ſtabbed and ſtricken through; only their caſe was much more miſerable; *they that are ſlain with the ſword* are ſoon rid out of their pain, *in a moment they go down to the grave*, Job xxi. 13. they have not the terror of ſeeing death make its advances towards them, and ſcarce feel it when the blow is given; it is but one ſharp ſtruggle, and the work is done. And if we be ready for another world, we need not be afraid of a ſhort paſſage to it, the quicker the better. But they that die by famine pine away, hunger preys upon their ſpirits and waſtes them gradually, nay, and it fets their ſpirits, and fills them with vexation, and is as great a torture to the mind as to the body. There are *bands in their death*, Pſal. lxxiii. 4. 2. The *barbarous murthers* that it was the occaſion of, *ver.* 10. *The hands of the pitiful women have* firſt ſlain and then *ſodden their own children*. This was lamented before, *chap.* ii. 20. and it was a thing to be *greatly lamented*, that any ſhould be ſo wicked as to do it, and that they ſhould be brought to ſuch extremities as to be tempted to it. But this horrid effect of long ſieges had been threatned in general, *Lev.* xxvi. 24. *Deut.* xxviii. 13. and particularly againſt Jeruſalem in the ſiege by the Chaldeans, *Jer.* xix. 9. *Ezek.* v. 10. The caſe was ſad enough that they had not wherewithal to feed their children, and make meat for them, *ver.* 4. but much worſe that they could find in their hearts to feed upon their children, and make meat of them; I know not whether to make it an inſtance of the power of neceſſity, or of the power of iniquity; but as the Gentile idolaters were juſtly *given up to vile affections*, Rom. i. 26. ſo theſe Jewiſh idolaters, and the women particularly, who had *made cakes to the queen of heaven*, and taught their children to do ſo too, were *ſtript of natural affection*, and that to their own children. Being thus left to *diſhonour their own nature* was a righteous judgment upon them for the diſhonour they had done to God.

7. Jeruſalem comes down utterly and wonderfully. 1. The deſtruction of Jeruſalem is a compleat deſtruction, *ver.* 11. *The Lord hath accompliſhed his fury*, i. e. he has made thorough work of it, has executed all that he purpoſed in wrath againſt Jeruſalem, and hath remitted no part of the ſentence. He hath poured out the full vials of his fierce anger, poured them out to the bottom, even the dregs of them. He hath *kindled a fire in Zion*, which has not only conſumed the houſes, and levelled them with the ground, but beyond what other fires do, hath *devoured the foundations thereof*, as if they were to be no more built upon. 2. It is an amazing deſtruction, *ver.* 12. It was a ſurpriſe to the kings of the earth who are acquainted with, and inquiſitive about the ſtate of their neighbours; nay, it was ſo to *all the inhabitants of the world* that knew Jeruſalem, or had ever heard or read of it, they could not have believed that the adverſary and enemy ſhould ever have entred into the gates of Jeruſalem; for,(1.) They knew Jeruſalem was ſtrongly fortified, not only by walls and bulwarks, but by the numbers and ſtrength of its inhabitants; the ſtronghold of Zion was thought to be impregnable. (2.) They knew it was the *city of the great King*, where the Lord of the whole earth had in a more peculiar manner his reſidence; it was the holy city, and therefore they thought it was ſo much under the divine protection, that it would be in vain for any of its enemies to make an attack upon it. (3.) They knew that many an attempt made upon it had been baffled, witneſs that of Sennacherib: They were therefore amazed when they heard of the Chaldeans making themſelves maſters of it, and concluded it was certainly by an immediate hand of God that Jeruſalem was given up to them; it was by a commiſſion from him that the enemy broke through and entred the gates of Jeruſalem.

13. ¶ For the ſins of her prophets, *and* the iniquities of her prieſts, that have ſhed the blood of the juſt in the midſt of her: 14. They have wandred *as* blind *men* in the ſtreets, they have polluted themſelves with blood, ſo that men could not touch their garments. 15. They cried unto them, Depart ye, *it is* unclean, depart, depart, touch not, when they fled away and wandred: they ſaid among the heathen, They ſhall no more ſojourn *there*. 16. The anger of the LORD hath divided them, he will no more regard them: they reſpected not the perſons of the prieſts, they favoured not the elders. 17. As for us, our eyes as yet failed for our vain help: in our watching we have watched for a nation *that* could not ſave *us*. 18. They hunt our ſteps that we cannot go in our ſtreets: our end is near, our days are fulfilled, for our end is come. 19. Our perſecutors are ſwifter than the eagles of the heaven: they purſued us upon the mountains, they laid wait for us in the wilderneſs. 20. The breath of our noſtrils, the anointed of the LORD was taken in their pits, of whom we ſaid, Under his ſhadow we ſhall live among the heathen.

Here is 1. The ſins they are charged with, for which God brought this deſtruction upon them, and which ſerve to juſtify God in it, *ver.* 13, 14. It is *for the ſins of her prophets*, and the *iniquities of her prieſts*; not that the people were innocent, no, they *loved to have it ſo*, Jer. v. 31. and it was to pleaſe them that the prophets and prieſts did as they did; but the fault is chiefly laid upon them who ſhould have taught them better, ſhould have reproved and admoniſhed them, and told them what would be in the end hereof; of the hands of theſe watchmen who did not give them warning, will their blood be required. Note, Nothing ripens a people more for ruin, nor fills the meaſure faſter than the ſins of their prieſts and prophets. The particular ſin charged upon them is perſecution, the falſe prophets and corrupt prieſts joined their power and intereſt to *ſhed the blood of the*

the juſt in the midſt of her, i. e. the blood of God's prophets and of thoſe that adhered to them; they not only ſhed the blood of their innocent children, whom they ſacrificed to Moloch, but the blood of the righteous men that were among them, whom they ſacrificed to that more cruel idol of enmity to the truth and true religion. This was the ſin which the Lord would not pardon, 2 *Kings* xxiv. 4. and which brought the laſt deſtruction upon Jeruſalem, *Jam.* v. 6. *Ye have condemned, and killed the juſt.* And the prieſts and prophets were the ringleaders in perſecution, as in Chriſt's time the chief prieſts and ſcribes were the men that incenſed the people againſt him, who otherwiſe would have perſiſted in their hoſanna's. Now theſe are they that *wandered as blind men in the ſtreets*, ver. 14. they ſtrayed from the paths of juſtice, were blind to every thing that is good, but to do evil they were quickſighted; God ſaith of corrupt judges, that *they know not, neither do they underſtand, they walk in darkneſs*, Pſal. lxxxii. 5. and Chriſt ſaith of the corrupt teachers, that *they are blind leaders of the blind*, Matth. xv. 14. They have *ſo polluted themſelves with* innocent *blood*, the blood of the ſaints, that men *could not touch their garments*, i. e. they made themſelves odious to all about them, ſo that good men were as ſhy of touching them as of touching a dead body, which contracted a ceremonial pollution; or of touching the bloody clothes of one ſlain, which tender ſpirits care not to do. There is nothing that will make prophets and prieſts to be abhorred ſo much as a ſpirit of perſecution.

2. The teſtimony of their neighbours produced in evidence againſt them, both to convict them of ſin, and to ſhew the equity of God's proceedings againſt them. Some that are grown very impudent in ſin boaſt that they *care not what people ſay of them*, but God, by the prophet, would have the Jews to take notice what people ſaid of them, and what was the opinion of the ſtanders by concerning them, *ver.* 15, 16. what they ſaid, nay, what *they cried unto them*, eſpecially to the corrupt prieſts and prophets, *among the heathen.* (1.) They upbraided them with their pretended purity, while they lived in all manner of real iniquity. They cried to them, *Depart ye, it is unclean.* You were ſo preciſe, you would not touch a Gentile, but cried, *Depart, depart, ſtand by thy ſelf, I am holier than thou*, Iſa. lxv. 5. Thus the proſecutors of Chriſt would not go *into the judgment-hall, leſt they ſhould be defiled:* but can you now keep the Gentiles from touching you, when God has delivered you into their hands? When you fly away and wander, you will bid them ſtand off and not touch you, becauſe they are unclean; but in vain, theſe ſerpents will not be charmed or enchanted thus, no, they will not *reſpect the perſons of the prieſts*, nor *favour the elders*, the moſt venerable perſons will to them be deſpicable. (2.) They upbraided them with their ſins, and the anger of God againſt them for their ſins, and the direful effects of that anger: *They cried to them, Depart ye, it is unclean*; they all cried out ſhame on them, and could eaſily foreſee that God would not long ſuffer ſo provoking a people to continue in ſo good a land. They knew their *ſtatutes and judgments were righteous*, and expected they ſhould be *a wiſe and underſtanding people*, Deut. iv. 6. But when they ſaw them quite otherwiſe, they cried, *depart, depart*; they ſoon read their doom, that the land would ſpue them out, as it had done their predeceſſors, and when they ſaw the diſperſed of *Jacob fleeing and wandring*, they told them of it. They ſaid, Now *the anger of the Lord hath divided them*, has diſperſed them into all countries, becauſe *they reſpected not the perſons of the prieſts*, the pious prieſts that were among them, ſuch as Zechariah the ſon of Jehoiada, Jeremiah, and others; neither did they *favour the elders*, but deſpiſed them and their authority, when they went about to check them for their vicious courſes; the very heathen foreſaw this would ruin them. (3.) They triumphed in their ruin as irrecoverable: They ſaid, when they ſaw them expelled out of their own land, now *they ſhall no more ſojourn there*, they have bidden it a final farewel, never more to return to it, for *God will no more regard them*; and how then can they help themſelves? Herein they were miſtaken, God had not caſt them off for all this; yet thus much is intimated, that all about them obſerved them to be ſo very provoking to their God, that there was no reaſon to expect any other, but that they ſhould be quite abandoned.

3. The deſpair which they themſelves were almoſt brought to under their calamities. Having heard what they ſaid concerning them *among the heathen*, let us now hear what they ſay concerning themſelves, *ver.* 17. *as for us*, we look upon our caſe to be in a manner helpleſs: *Our end is near*, ver. 18. the end both of our church and of our ſtate; we are juſt at the brink of the ruin of both; nay, *our end is come*, we are utterly undone, a fatal, final period is put to all our comforts, the days of our proſperity are fulfilled, they are numbered and finiſhed. Thus their fears concurred with the hopes of their enemies, that the *Lord would no more regard them.* For, (1.) The refugees they fled to diſappointed them. They looked for help from this and the other powerful ally, but to no purpoſe, it proved vain help, the ſuccours they expected did not come in, or at leaſt they had not the ſucceſs they expected; and their eyes failed with looking for that which never came, *ver.* 17. they *watched in watching*, they watched long, and with a great deal of earneſtneſs and impatience *for a nation* that promiſed them aſſiſtance, but failed them, and fruſtrated their expectations, they *could not ſave them*, they were too weak to contend with the Chaldean army, and therefore retired. Help from creatures is vain help, *Pſal.* lx. 11. and we may look for it till our eyes fail, till our hearts fail, and come ſhort of it at laſt. (2.) The perſecutors they fled from overtook them and overcame them, *ver.* 18. *They hunt our ſteps that we cannot go in our ſtreets:* when the Chaldeans beſieged the city, they raiſed their batteries ſo high above the walls that they could command the town, and ſhoot at people as they went along the ſtreets; they *hunted them* with their arrows from place to place. When the city was broken up, and all the men of war fled, their *perſecutors were ſwifter than the eagles of heaven*, when they fly upon their prey, *ver.* 19. there was no eſcaping them; they *purſued them upon the mountains*, and when they thought they had got clear of them, they fell into the hands of thoſe that *laid wait for them in the wilderneſs*, to cut off our retreat, and to pick up ſtragglers: Nay, the king himſelf, though he may be ſuppoſed to have all the advantages the exigence of the caſe would admit to favour his flight, yet he cannot eſcape, for divine vengeance purſues him with them, and then, *ver.* 20. *The breath of our noſtrils, the anointed of the Lord, was taken in their pits.* Some apply it to Joſiah, who was killed in battle by the king of Egypt; but it is rather to be underſtood of Zedekiah, who was the laſt king of the houſe of David, and who was purſued by the Chaldeans, and ſeized in the plains of Jericho, *Jer.* xxxix. 5. He was *the anointed of the Lord*, heir of that family which God had appointed to the government; he was very much confided in by the Jewiſh ſtate; *they ſaid, under his ſhadow we ſhall live among the heathen*; they promiſed themſelves that the remnant which were left after Jeconiah's captivity ſhould, under the protection of his government, yet again *take root downward, and bear fruit upward.* They thought, though they were ſo reduced that they could not think of reigning over the heathen, as they had done, yet they might make a ſhift to live among them, and not be inſulted and pulled to pieces by them. Thus apt are ſinking intereſts, not only to catch at every twig, but to think it will recover them. Jeruſalem died of a conſumption, a flattering diſtemper, even when ſhe was ready to expire ſhe formed ſome hopeful ſymptoms to her ſelf, and on them grounded a hope that ſhe ſhould recover; but what came of it? the ſhadow, under which they thought they ſhould live, proved like that of Jonah's gourd, which *withered in a night:* He that was *the anointed of the Lord*, was taken *in their pits*, as if he had been but a beaſt of prey; ſo little account did they make of a perſon deemed ſacred, and not to be violated! Note, When we make any creature *the breath of our noſtrils*, and promiſe our ſelves that we ſhall live by it, it is juſt with God to ſtop that breath, and deprive us of the life we expected by it, for God will have the honour of being himſelf alone, *our life, and the length of our days.*

21. Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom, that dwelleſt in the land of Uz; the cup alſo ſhall paſs through unto thee: thou ſhalt be drunken, and ſhalt make thy ſelf naked. 22. ¶ The puniſhment of thine iniquity is accompliſhed, O daughter of Zion, he will no more carry thee away into captivity: he will viſit thine iniquity, O daughter of Edom, he will diſcover thy ſins.

David's pſalms of lamentation commonly conclude with ſome word of comfort, which is as life from the dead, and light ſhining out of darkneſs, ſo doth this lamentation here in this chapter; the people of God are now in great diſtreſs, their aſpects all doleful, their proſpects all frightful, and their ill-natured neighbours the Edomites inſult over them, and do all they can to exaſperate their deſtroyers againſt them; ſuch was their violence againſt their brother Jacob, *Obad.* 10. ſuch their ſpleen at Jeruſalem, of which they cried, *raſe it, raſe it*, Pſalm cxxxvii. 7. Now it is here foretold, for the encouragement of God's people,

1. That an end ſhall be put to Zion's troubles, *ver.* 22. *The puniſhment of thine iniquity is accompliſhed, O daughter of Zion*; not the full of that puniſhment that it deſerves, but of that which God has deſigned and determined to inflict, and which was neceſſary to anſwer the end, the glorifying of God's juſtice, and the taking away of their ſin: The captivity which is *the puniſhment of thine iniquity is accompliſhed*, Iſa. xl. 2. and *he will no longer keep thee in captivity*, ſo it may be read; as well as *he will no more carry thee into captivity*; he will turn again thy captivity, and work a glorious releaſe for thee. Note, The troubles of God's people ſhall be continued no longer than till they have done their work for which they were ſent.

2. That an end ſhall be put to Edom's triumphs. It is ſpoken ironically, *ver.* 21. *Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom*, go on to inſult over Zion in diſtreſs, till thou haſt filled up the meaſure of thine iniquity; do ſo, rejoice in thy own preſent exemption from the common fate of thy neighbours. This is like Solomon's upbraiding the young man with his ungoverned mirth, *Eccl.* xi. 9. *Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth*; rejoice if thou canſt when God comes to reckon with thee, and that he will do ere long; *the cup* of

of trembling, which it is now Jeruſalem's turn to drink deep of, *ſhall paſs through unto thee*, it ſhall go round till it comes to be thy lot to pledge it. Note, This is a good reaſon why we ſhould not inſult over any that are in miſery, becauſe we our ſelves alſo are in the body, and we know not how ſoon their caſe may be ours: But thoſe who pleaſe themſelves in the calamities of God's church, muſt expect to have their doom, as aiders and abettors, with them that are inſtrumental in thoſe calamities. The deſtruction of the Edomites was foretold by this prophet, *Jer.* xlix. 7, *&c.* and the people of God muſt encourage themſelves againſt their preſent rudeneſs and inſolence with the proſpect of it. 1. It will be a ſhameful deſtruction; *the cup* that *ſhall paſs unto thee* ſhall intoxicate thee, and that is ſhame enough to any man, *thou ſhalt be drunken*, quite infatuated, and at thy wit's end, ſhalt ſtagger in all thy counſels, and ſtumble in all thy enterprizes, and then, as Noah, when he was drunk, *thou ſhalt make thy ſelf naked*, and expoſe thy ſelf to contempt. Note, Thoſe who ridicule God's people will juſtly be left to themſelves to do that, ſome time or other, by which they will be made ridiculous. 2. It will be a righteous deſtruction, God will herein *viſit thine iniquity*, and *diſcover thy ſins*, he will puniſh them, and, to juſtify himſelf therein, he will diſcover them, and make it to appear he has juſt cauſe thus to proceed againſt them. Nay, the puniſhment of the ſin ſhall ſo exactly anſwer the ſin, that it ſhall it ſelf plainly diſcover it. Sometimes God doth ſo viſit the iniquity, as that he that runs may read the ſin in the puniſhment. But ſooner or later ſin will be viſited and diſcovered, and all the hidden works of darkneſs brought to light.

CHAP. V.

This chapter, though it has the ſame number of verſes with the firſt, ſecond, and fourth, yet is not alphabetical as they were, but the ſcope of it is the ſame with that of all the foregoing elegies. We have in it, 1. *A remonſtrance of the preſent calamitous ſtate of God's people in their captivity*, ver. 1,—16. 2. *A proteſtation of their concern for God's ſanctuary, as that which lay nearer their heart than any ſecular intereſt of their own*, ver. 17, 18. 3. *A humble ſupplication to God, and expoſtulation with him, for the returns of mercy*, ver. 19,—22. *for they that lament, and do not pray, ſin in their lamentations. Some ancient verſions call this chapter, The prayer of Jeremiah.*

1. REmember, O LORD, what is come upon us: conſider, and behold our reproach. 2. Our inheritance is turned to ſtrangers, our houſes to aliens. 3. We are orphans and fatherleſs, our mothers *are* as widows. 4. We have drunken our water for money, our wood is ſold unto us. 5. Our necks *are* under perſecution: we labour, *and* have no reſt. 6. We have given the hand to the Egyptians, *and* to the Aſſyrians, to be ſatisfied with bread. 7. Our fathers have ſinned, and *are* not, and we have born their iniquities. 8. Servants have ruled over us: *there is* none that doth deliver *us* out of their hand. 9. We gat our bread with *the peril of* our lives, becauſe of the ſword of the wilderneſs. 10. Our ſkin was black like an oven, becauſe of the terrible famine. 11. They raviſhed the women in Zion, *and* the maids in the cities of Judah. 12. Princes are hanged up by their hand: the faces of elders were not honoured. 13. They took the young men to grind, and the children fell under the wood. 14. The elders have ceaſed from the gate, the young men from their muſick. 15. The joy of our heart is ceaſed, our dance is turned into mourning. 16. The crown is fallen *from* our head: wo unto us that we have ſinned.

Is any afflicted? let him pray; and let him in prayer pour out his complaint to God, and make known before him his trouble; the people of God do ſo here; being overwhelmed with grief, they give vent to their ſorrows at the footſtool of the throne of grace, and ſo give themſelves eaſe; they complain not of evils feared, but of evils felt; *Remember what is come upon us*, ver. 1. what was of old threatened againſt us, and was long in the coming, is now at length *come upon us*, and we are ready to ſink under it. *Remember what is* paſt, *conſider, and behold* what is preſent, and *let not all the trouble* we are in *ſeem little to thee*, and not worth taking notice of, *Neh.* ix. 32. Note, As it is a great comfort to us, ſo it ought to be a ſufficient one in our troubles, that God ſees and conſiders, and remembers all that *is come upon us*; and in our prayers we need only to recommend our caſe to his gracious and compaſſionate conſideration. The one word in which all their grievances are ſummed up is, reproach: *Conſider, and behold our reproach.* The troubles they were in, compared with their former dignity and plenty, were a greater reproach to them, than they would have been to any other people, eſpecially, conſidering their relation to God, and dependence upon him, and his former appearances for them; and therefore this they complain of very ſenſibly, becauſe, as it was a reproach, it reflected upon the name and honour of that God, who had owned them for his people: *And what wilt thou do unto thy great name?*

(1.) They acknowledge the reproach of ſin which they bear, *the reproach of their youth*, which Ephraim bemoans himſelf for, *Jer.* xxxi. 19. of the early days of their nation: This comes in in the midſt of their complaints, *ver.* 7. but may well be put in the front of them, *Our fathers have ſinned, and are not*, they are dead and gone, but *we have born their iniquities.* This is not here a peeviſh complaint, or an imputation of unrighteouſneſs to God, like that which we have, *Jer.* xxxi. 29. *Ezek.* xviii. 2. *The fathers did eat ſour grapes, and the childrens teeth are ſet on edge*, and therefore, *the ways of the Lord are not equal*; but it is a penitent confeſſion of the ſins of their anceſtors, which they themſelves alſo had perſiſted in, for which they now juſtly ſuffered, *i. e.* the judgments God brought upon them were ſo very great, that it appeared God had in them an eye to the ſins of their anceſtors, (becauſe they had not been remarkably puniſhed in this world) as well as to their own ſins; and thus God was juſtified both in his connivance at their anceſtors, he *laid up their iniquity for their children*, and in his ſeverity with them, on whom he viſited that iniquity, *Matt.* xxiii. 35, 36. Thus they do here, 1. Submit themſelves to the divine juſtice; Lord, thou art juſt in all that is brought upon us, for we are a ſeed of evil doers, children of wrath, and heirs of the curſe; we are ſinful, and we have it by kind. Note, The ſins which God looks back upon in puniſhing, we muſt look back upon in repenting, and muſt take notice of all that which will help to juſtify God in correcting us. 2. They refer themſelves to the divine pity; Lord, *our fathers have ſinned*, and we juſtly ſmart for their ſins; but *they are not*, they were taken away from the evil to come, they lived not to ſee and ſhare in theſe miſeries that are *come upon us*, and we are left to *bear their iniquities*; now though herein God is righteous, yet it muſt be owned our caſe is piteous, and worthy of compaſſion. Note, If we be penitent and patient under what we ſuffer for the ſins of our fathers, we may expect that he that puniſheth will pity, and will ſoon return in mercy to us.

(2.) They repreſent the reproach of trouble which they bear, in divers particulars, which tend much to their diſgrace.

1. They are diſſeized of that good land which God gave them, and their enemies have got poſſeſſion of it, *ver.* 2. Canaan was their inheritance, it was theirs by promiſe, God gave it to them and their ſeed, and they held it by grant from his crown, *Pſalm* cxxxvi. 21, 22. but now it is turned to ſtrangers, they poſſeſs it that have no right to it, who are *ſtrangers to the commonwealth of Iſrael, and aliens to the covenants of promiſe*, they dwell in the houſes that we built, and this is our reproach. It is the happineſs of all God's ſpiritual Iſrael, that the heavenly Canaan is an inheritance that they cannot be diſſeized of, that ſhall never be turned to ſtrangers.

2. Their ſtate and nation is brought into a condition like that of widows and orphans, *ver.* 3. *We are fatherleſs*, i. e. helpleſs, we have none to protect us, to provide for us, to take any care of us: Our king, who is the father of the country, is cut off; nay, God our Father ſeems to have forſaken us, and caſt us off: *Our mothers*, our cities, that were as fruitful mothers in Iſrael, *are* now *as widows*, are as wives, whoſe husbands are dead, deſtitute of comfort, and expoſed to wrong and injury, and this is our reproach; for we who made a figure, are now looked on with contempt.

3. They are put hard to it to provide neceſſaries for themſelves and their families, whereas, when time was, they lived in abundance, and had plenty of every thing. Water uſed to be free, and eaſily come by, but now, *ver.* 4. *We have drunk our water for money*, and the ſaying is no longer true, *Uſus communis aquarum.* So hardly did their oppreſſors uſe them, that they could not have a draught of fair water but they muſt purchaſe it either with money or work! Formerly they had fuel too for the fetching, but now *our wood is ſold to us*, and we pay dear for every faggot. Now were they puniſhed for employing their children to gather wood for fire, with which to *bake cakes for the queen of heaven*, Jer. vii. 18. They were perfectly proſcribed by their oppreſſors, were forbidden the uſe both of fire and water, according to the ancient form, *Interdico tibi aquæ & igni.* But what muſt they do for bread? Truly that was as hard to come by as any thing, for, 1. Some of them ſold their liberty for it, *ver.* 6. *We have given the hand to the Egyptians, and to the Aſſyrians*, have made the beſt bargain we could with them, to ſerve them, that we might *be ſatisfied with bread.* We were glad to ſubmit to the meaneſt employment upon the hardeſt terms to get a ſorry livelihood; we have yielded our ſelves to be their vaſſals, have parted with all to them, as the Egyptians did to Pharaoh, in the years of famine, that we might have ſomething for our ſelves and families to ſubſiſt on. The neighbour nations uſed to trade with Judah for wheat, *Ezek.* xxvii. 17. for it was a fruitful land, but now it *eats up the inhabitants*, and they are glad to make court to the Egyptians and Aſſyrians. 2. Others of them ventured their lives for it, *ver.* 9. *We got our bread with the peril of our lives*; when, being ſtraitned by the ſiege, and all proviſions cut off, they either ſallied or ſtole out of the city,

to

to fetch in ſome ſupply, they were in danger of falling into the hands of the beſiegers, and being put to the ſword, *the ſword of the wilderneſs* it is called, or, *of the plain*, for ſo the word ſignifies, the beſiegers lying diſperſed every where in the plains that were about the city. Let us take occaſion from hence to bleſs God for the plenty that we enjoy, that we get our bread ſo eaſily, ſcarce with the ſweat of our face, much leſs *with the peril of our lives*; and for the peace we enjoy, that we can go out and enjoy, not only the neceſſary products, but the pleaſures of the country, without any fear of *the ſword of the wilderneſs*.

4. They are brought into ſlavery, who were a free people, and not only their own maſters, but maſters of all about them, and this is as much as any thing their reproach, *ver.* 5. *Our necks are under* the grievous and intolerable yoke of *perſecution*, the iron yoke which Jeremiah foretold ſhould be laid upon them, *Jer.* xxviii. 14. we are uſed like beaſts in the yoke, that wholly ſerve their owners, and are at the command of their drivers. That which aggravated the ſervitude was, 1. That their labours were inceſſant, like thoſe of Iſrael in Egypt, that were daily tasked, nay overtasked; *we labour and have no reſt*, neither leave nor leiſure to reſt. The oxen in the yoke are unyoked at night, and have reſt, ſo they have, by a particular proviſion of the law, on the ſabbath-day; but the poor captives in Babylon, that were compelled to work for their living, *laboured, and had no reſt*, no nights reſt, no ſabbath reſt, they were quite tired out with continual toil. 2. That their maſters were inſufferable, *ver.* 8. *Servants have ruled over us*, and nothing more vexatious than *a ſervant when he reigneth*, Prov. xxx. 22. They were not only the great men of the Chaldeans that commanded them, but even the meaneſt of their ſervants abuſed them at pleaſure, and inſulted over them; and they muſt be at their beck too. The curſe of Canaan is now become the doom of Judah, *a ſervant of ſervants ſhall he be*. They would not be ruled by their God, and by his ſervants the prophets, whoſe rule was gentle and gracious, and therefore juſtly are they ruled with rigour by their enemies, and their ſervants. 3. That they ſaw no probable way for the redreſs of their grievances; *there is none that doth deliver us out of their hand*, not only none to reſcue us out of our captivity, but none to check and reſtrain the inſolence of the ſervants that abuſe us, and trample upon us, which one would think their maſters ſhould have done, becauſe it was an uſurpation of their authority; but it ſhould ſeem they connived at it, and encouraged it, and, as if they were not worthy of the correction of gentlemen, they are turned over to the footmen to be kicked: Well might they pray, *Lord, conſider, and behold our reproach*.

5. They that uſed to be feaſted, are now famiſhed, *ver.* 10. *Our ſkin was black like an oven*, dried and parched too, *becauſe of the terrible famine*, the *ſtorms of famine*, ſo the word is; for though famine comes gradually upon a people, yet it comes violently, and bears down all before it, and there is no reſiſting it; and this alſo is their diſgrace, hence we read of *the reproach of famine*, which in captivity they received among the heathen, *Ezek.* xxxvi. 30.

6. All ſorts of people, even they whoſe perſons and characters were moſt inviolable, were abuſed and diſhonoured. 1. The *women* were *raviſhed*, even *the women in Zion*, that holy mountain, *ver.* 11. The committing of ſuch abominable wickedneſs there is very juſtly and ſadly complained of. 2. The great men were not only put to death, but put to ignominious deaths; *princes were hanged*, as if they had been ſlaves, *by the hands* of the Chaldeans, *ver.* 12. they took a pride in doing this barbarous execution with *their own hands*. Some think, the dead bodies of the princes, after they were ſlain with the ſword, were hung up, as the bodies of Saul's ſons, in diſgrace to them, and as it were to expiate the nation's guilt. 3. No reſpect was ſhewed to magiſtrates, and thoſe in authority; *the faces of elders*, elders in age, elders in office, *were not honoured*; this will be particularly remembred againſt the Chaldeans another day, *Iſa.* xlvii. 6. *Upon the ancient haſt thou very heavily laid thy yoke*. 4. The tenderneſs of youth was no more conſidered than the gravity of old age, *ver.* 13. *They took the young men to grind*, at the hand-mills, nay, perhaps, at the horſe-mills; *the young men have carried the griſt*, ſo ſome; *have carried the mill*, or *mill-ſtones*, ſo others; they loaded them as if they had been beaſts of burthen, and ſo broke their backs when they were young, and made the reſt of their lives the more miſerable: Nay, they made *the* little *children* carry their wood home for fuel, and laid ſuch burthens upon them that they *fell* down *under* them. So very inhuman were theſe cruel task-maſters!

7. An end was put to all their gladneſs, and their joy quite extinguiſhed, *ver.* 14. *The young men*, that uſed to be diſpoſed to mirth, have ceaſed *from their muſick*, have hung their harps upon the willow-trees. It doth indeed well become old men to ceaſe from their muſick, it is time to lay it by with a gracious contempt, when *all the daughters of muſick are brought low*; but it ſpeaks ſome great calamity upon a people, when their young men are made to ceaſe from it. It was ſo with the body of the people, *ver.* 15. *The joy of their heart was ceaſed*, they never knew what joy was ſince the enemy came in upon them like a flood, for ever ſince *deep* has *called unto deep*, and one wave has flowed in upon the neck of another, ſo that we are quite overwhelmed; *our dance is turned into mourning*, inſtead of leaping for joy, as formerly, we ſink and lie down in ſorrow. This may refer eſpecially to the joy of their ſolemn feaſts, and the dancing uſed in them, (*Jud.* xxi. 21.) which was not only modeſt but ſacred dancing, this was *turned into mourning*, which was doubled on their feſtival days, in remembrance of their former pleaſant things.

8. An end was put to all their glory. 1. The publick adminiſtration of juſtice was their glory, but that was gone; *the elders have ceaſed from the gate*, ver. 14. the courſe of juſtice, which uſed to run down like a river, is now ſtopped; the courts of juſtice, that uſed to be kept with ſo much ſolemnity, are put down; for the judges are ſlain, or carried captives. 2. The royal dignity was their glory, but that alſo was gone; *the crown is fallen from our head*; not only the king himſelf fallen into diſgrace, but *the crown*; he has no ſucceſſor; the regalia are all loſt. Note, Earthly crowns are fading, falling things; but, bleſſed be God, there is *a crown of glory that fades not away*, that never falls; *a kingdom that cannot be moved*. Upon this complaint, but with reference to all the foregoing complaints, they make that penitent acknowledgment, *Wo unto us that we have ſinned!* Alas for us! our caſe is very deplorable, and it is all long of our ſelves we are undone, and, which aggravates the matter, we are undone by our own hands; God is righteous, for *we have ſinned*. Note, All our woes are owing to our own ſin and folly. If *the crown of our head be fallen* (for ſo the words run) if we loſe our excellency, and become mean, we may thank our ſelves, we have by our own iniquity profaned our crown, and *laid our honour in the duſt*.

17. For this our heart is faint, for theſe *things* our eyes are dim. 18. Becauſe of the mountain of Zion, which is deſolate, the foxes walk upon it. 19. Thou, O LORD, remaineſt for ever: thy throne from generation to generation. 20. Wherefore doſt thou forget us for ever, *and* forſake us ſo long time? 21. Turn thou us unto thee, O LORD, and we ſhall be turned: renew our days as of old. 22. But thou haſt utterly rejected us; thou art very wroth againſt us.

Here, 1. The people of God expreſs the deep concern they had for the ruins of the temple, more than for any other of their calamities; the intereſts of God's houſe lay nearer their hearts, than thoſe of their own, *ver.* 17, 18. *For this our heart is faint*, and ſinks under the load of its own heavineſs, *for theſe things our eyes are dim*, and our ſight is gone, as is uſual in a deliquium, or fainting fit: It is *becauſe of the mountain of Zion, which is deſolate*, the holy mountain, and the temple built upon that mountain: For other deſolations our hearts grieve, and our eyes weep, but for this our hearts faint, and our eyes are dim. Note, Nothing lies ſo heavy upon the ſpirits of good people, as that which threatens the ruin of religion, or weakens the intereſts of that; and it is a comfort if we can appeal to God that that afflicts us more than any temporal affliction to our ſelves. The people had polluted the *mountain of Zion* with their ſins, and therefore God has juſtly made it *deſolate*, to that degree, that *the foxes walk upon it*, as freely and commonly as they do in the woods. It is ſad indeed when the *mountain of Zion* is become *a portion for foxes*, Pſal. lxiii. 10. but ſin had firſt made it ſo, *Ezek.* xiii. 4.

2. They comfort themſelves with the doctrine of God's eternity, and the perpetuity of his government, *ver.* 19. But *thou, O Lord, remaineſt for ever*. This they are taught to do by that pſalm which is entitled, *A prayer of the afflicted*, Pſalm cii. 27, 28. When all our creature-comforts are removed from us, and our hearts fail us, we may then encourage our ſelves with the belief, 1. Of God's eternity; *Thou remaineſt for ever*; what ſhakes the world, gives no diſturbance to him that made it; whatever revolutions there are on earth, there is no change in the eternal mind; God is ſtill the ſame, and *remains for ever* infinitely wiſe and holy, juſt and good; with him there is *no variableneſs nor ſhadow of turning*. 2. Of the never failing continuance of his dominion; *Thy throne is from generation to generation*; the throne of glory, the throne of grace, and the throne of government, are all unchangeable, immoveable, and this is matter of comfort to us when *the crown is fallen from our head*. When the thrones of princes, that ſhould be our protectors, are brought to the duſt, and buried in it, God's throne continues ſtill; he ſtill rules the world, and rules it for the good of his church: The Lord reigns, reigns for ever, even *thy God, O Zion*.

3. They humbly expoſtulate with God concerning the low condition they were now in, and the frowns of heaven they were now under, *ver.* 20. *Wherefore doſt thou forget us for ever*, as if we were quite caſt out of mind? *Wherefore doſt thou forſake us ſo long time*, as if we were quite deprived of the tokens of thy preſence? Wherefore doſt thou defer our deliverance, as if thou hadſt utterly abandoned us? Thou art the ſame, and, though the throne of thy ſanctuary is demoliſhed, thy throne in heaven is unſhaken. But wilt thou not be the ſame to us? Not as if they thought God had forgotten and forſaken them, much leſs feared his forgetting and forſaking them for ever; but thus they expreſs the value they had for his favour and preſence, which they thought it long that they

they were deprived of the evidence and comfort of. The laſt verſe may be read as ſuch an expoſtulation, and ſo the margin reads it, *For wilt thou utterly reject us? wilt thou be perpetually wroth with us?* not only not ſmile upon us, and remember us in mercy, but frown upon us, and lay us under the tokens of thy wrath; not only not draw nigh to us, but caſt us out of thy preſence, and forbid us to draw nigh to thee: How will this be reconciled with thy goodneſs and faithfulneſs, and the ſtability of thy covenant? We read it, *But thou haſt rejected us*, i. e. thou haſt given us cauſe to fear that thou haſt: Lord, how long ſhall we be in this temptation? Note, Though we may not quarrel with God, yet we may plead with him; and though we may not conclude that he has caſt us off, yet we may, with the prophet, *Jer.* xii. 1. humbly reaſon with him concerning his judgments, eſpecially the continuance of the deſolations of his ſanctuary.

4. They earneſtly pray to God for mercy and grace; Lord, do not reject *us for ever*, but *turn thou us unto thee, renew our days*, ver. 21. Theſe words, though they be not put laſt, yet the Rabbins, becauſe they would not have the book to conclude with thoſe melancholy words, *ver.* 22. repeat this prayer again, that the ſun may not ſet under a cloud, and ſo make theſe the laſt words, both in writing and reading this chapter. They here pray, 1. For converting grace, to prepare and qualify them for mercy: *Turn us to thee, O Lord.* They had complained that God had forſaken and forgotten them, and then their prayer is, not *Turn thou to us*, but *Turn us to thee*; which implies an acknowledgment that the cauſe of the diſtance was in themſelves. God never leaves any till they firſt leave him, nor ſtands afar off from any longer than while they ſtand afar off from him; if therefore he turn them to him in a way of duty, no doubt but he would preſently return to them in a way of mercy. This agrees with that repeated prayer, *Pſalm* lxxx. 3, 7, 19. *Turn us again, and then cauſe thy face to ſhine: Turn us* from our idols to thy ſelf, by a ſincere repentance and reformation, *and* then *we ſhall be turned.* This implies a farther acknowledgment of their own weakneſs and inability to turn themſelves. There is in our nature a bent to backſlide from God, but no diſpoſition to return to him, till his grace works in us both *to will and to do.* So neceſſary is that grace, that we may truly ſay, *Turn us, or we ſhall not be turned*, but ſhall wander endleſly; and ſo powerful and effectual is that grace, that we may as truly ſay, *Turn us, and we ſhall be turned*; for it is a day of power, almighty power, in which God's people are made a *willing people*, Pſalm cx. 3. 2. For reſtoring mercy: *Turn us to thee*, and then *renew our days as of old*, i. e. put us into the ſame happy ſtate that our anceſtors were in long ago, and that they continued long in; let it be with us as it was *at the firſt*, and *at the beginning*, Iſa. i. 26. Note, If God by his grace renew our hearts, he will by his favour *renew our days*, ſo that we ſhall *renew our youth as the eagle*, Pſalm ciii. 5. They that *repent, and do their firſt works*, ſhall rejoice, and recover their firſt comforts. God's mercies to his people have been *ever of old*, Pſalm xxv. 6. and therefore they may hope, even then when he ſeems to have forſaken and forgotten them, that the mercy which was *from everlaſting*, will be *to everlaſting*.

The end of the Lamentations of JEREMIAH.

AN

EXPOSITION

Of the Book of the

Prophet EZEKIEL,

With Practical Obſervations.

When we entered upon the writings of the prophets, which ſpeak of the things that ſhould be hereafter, *methought; we had the ſame call given us that St. John had,* Rev. iv. 1. Come up hither; *but when we enter upon the prophecy of this book, methinks we are called to* Come up higher: *As we go forward in time, for Ezekiel propheſied in the captivity, as Jeremiah propheſied juſt before it, ſo we ſoar upward in diſcoveries yet more ſublime of the divine glory; theſe waters of the ſanctuary ſtill grow deeper, ſo far from being fordable, that in ſome places they are ſcarce fathomable; yet, as deep as they are, out of them flow ſtreams which* make glad the city of our God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the moſt High. *As to this prophecy now before us we may enquire,* (1.) *Concerning the penman of it; it was Ezekiel; his name ſignifies,* The ſtrength of God; *or, one* girt, *or* ſtengthened of God. *He girded up the loins of his mind to the ſervice, and God put ſtrength into him. Whom God calls to any ſervice he will himſelf enable for it; if he gives commiſſion he will give power to execute it, Ezekiel's name was anſwered when God ſaid (and no doubt did as he ſaid)* I have made thy face ſtrong againſt their faces.— *The learned Selden in his book* De Diis Syris, *ſaith, it was the opinion of ſome of the ancients, that the prophet Ezekiel was the ſame with that Nazaratus Aſſyrius, whom Pythagoras (as himſelf relates) had for his tutor for ſome time, and whoſe lectures he attended; and it is agreed that they lived much about the ſame time. And we have reaſon to think that many of the Greek philoſophers were acquainted with the ſacred writings, and borrowed ſome of the beſt of their notions from them. If we may credit the tradition of the Jews he was put to death by the captives in Babylon, for his faithfulneſs and boldneſs in reproving them; that they dragged him upon the ſtones till his brains were daſhed out. An Arabick hiſtorian ſaith he was put to death, and was buried in the ſepulchre of Shem the ſon of Noah. So Hottinger relates,* Theſaur. Philol. lib. ii. ch. 1.

(2.) *Concerning the date of it, the place whence it is dated, and the time when. The ſcene is laid in Babylon, when it was a* houſe of bondage *to the* Iſrael of God; *there the prophecies of this book were preached, there they were written, when the prophet himſelf and the people to whom he propheſied were captives there. Ezekiel and Daniel are the only writing prophets of the Old Teſtament that lived and propheſied any where but in the land of Iſrael, except we add Jonah, who was ſent to Nineveh to propheſy; Ezekiel propheſied in the beginning of the captivity, Daniel in the latter end of it; it was an indication of God's good will to them, and his gracious deſigns concerning them in their affliction, that he raiſed up prophets among them, both to convince them when in the beginning of their troubles they were ſecure and unhumbled, which was Ezekiel's buſineſs, and to comfort them when in the latter end of their troubles they were dejected and diſcouraged. If the Lord had been pleaſed to kill them, he would not have uſed ſuch apt and proper means to cure them.*

(3.) *Concerning the matter and ſcope of it;* 1. *There is much in it that is very myſterious, dark and hard to be underſtood; eſpecially in the beginning and the latter end of it; which therefore the Jewiſh rabbins forbad the reading of to their young men, till they come to be thirty years of age, leſt by the difficulties they met with there they ſhould be prejudiced againſt the ſcriptures: but if we read theſe difficult parts of ſcripture with humility and reverence, and ſearch them diligently, though we may not be able to unty all the knots we meet with, no more than we can ſolve all the phænomena in the book of nature, yet we may from them, as from the book of nature, gather a great deal for the confirming of our faith, and the encouraging of our hope, in the God we worſhip.* 2. *Though the viſions here be intricate, ſuch as an elephant may ſwim in, yet the ſermons are moſtly plain, ſuch as a lamb may wade in; and the chief deſign of them is to* ſhew God's people their tranſgreſſions, *that in their captivity they might be repenting and not repining. It ſhould ſeem he was conſtantly attended, for we read of their* ſitting before him as God's people ſate to hear his words, *chap.* xxxiii. 31. *and that he was occaſionally conſulted, for we read of the elders of Iſrael that came to* enquire of the Lord *by him,* chap. xiv. 1, 3. *And as it was of great uſe to the oppreſſed captives themſelves to have a prophet with them, ſo it was a teſtimony to their holy religion againſt their oppreſſors, that ridiculed it and them.* 3. *Though the reproofs here, and the threatnings, be very ſharp and bold, yet towards the cloſe of the book very comfortable aſſurances are given of great mercy God had in ſtore for them, and there, at length, we ſhall meet with ſomething that has reference to goſpel times, and which was to have its accompliſhment in the kingdom of the Meſſiah, of whom indeed this prophet ſpeaks leſs than almoſt any of the prophets. But by opening the* terrors of the Lord *he prepares Chriſt's way; by the law is the knowledge of ſin, and ſo it becomes our* ſchool-maſter to bring us to Chriſt. *The viſions, which were the prophet's credentials, we have,* chap. i, --- iii. *the reproofs and threatnings,* chap. iv, --- xxiv. *betwixt and the comforts we have in the latter part of the book, we have meſſages ſent to the nations that bordered upon the land of Iſrael, whoſe deſtruction is foretold,* chap. xxv. --- xxxv. *to make way for the reſtoration of God's Iſrael, and the re-eſtabliſhment of their city and temple, which are foretold,* chap. xxxvi. ad fin. *And thoſe who would apply the comforts to themſelves, muſt apply the convictions to themſelves.*

CHAP.

CHAP. I.

In this chapter we have, 1. *The common circumstances of the prophecy now to be delivered, the time when it was delivered,* ver. 1. *the place where,* ver. 2. *and the person by whom,* ver. 3. 2. *The uncommon introduction to it by a vision of the glory of God;* (1.) *In his attendance and retinue in the upper world, where his throne is surrounded with angels, here called* living creatures, *ver.* 4,—14, (2.) *In his providences concerning the lower world, represented by the wheels and their motions,* ver. 15,—26. (3.) *In the face of Jesus Christ sitting upon the throne,* ver. 26,—28. *And the more we are acquainted, and the more intimately we converse with the glory of God in these three branches of it, the more commanding influence will divine revelation have upon us, and the more ready shall we be to submit to it, which is the thing aimed at in prefacing the prophecies of this book with these visions. When such a God of glory speaks, it concerns us to hear with attention and reverence; it is at our peril if we do not.*

1. NOW it came to pass in the thirteenth year, in the fourth *month*, in the fifth *day* of the month, (as I *was* among the captives by the river of Chebar) *that* the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God. 2. In the fifth *day* of the month (which *was* the fifth year of king Jehoiakim's captivity) 3. The word of the LORD came expresly unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans, by the river Chebar, and the hand of the LORD was there upon him.

The circumstances of the vision which Ezekiel saw, and in which he received his commission and instructions, are here very particularly set down, that the narrative may appear to be authentick and not romantick. It may be of use to keep an account when and where God has been pleased to manifest himself to our souls in a peculiar manner, that the *return of the day*, and our return to *the place of the altar*, Gen. xiii. 4. may receive the pleasing grateful remembrance of God's favour to us. Remember, O my soul, and never forget what communications of divine love thou didst receive at such a time, at such a place: tell others what God did for thee.

1. The time when Ezekiel had this vision is here recorded. It was *in the thirtieth year*, ver. 1. some make it the thirtieth year of the prophet's age; being a priest he was at that age to enter upon the full execution of the priestly office, but being debarred from that by the iniquity and calamity of the times, now they had neither temple nor altar, God at that age called him to the dignity of a prophet. Others make it to be the thirtieth year from the beginning of the reign of Nabopolassar, the father of Nebuchadnezzar, from which the Chaldeans began a new computation of time, as they had done from Nabonassar 123 years before. Nabopolassar reigned 19 years, and this was the 11th of his son, which makes the 30. And it was proper enough for Ezekiel, when he was in Babylon, to use the computation they there used; as we in foreign countries date by the new style; and he afterwards useth the melancholy computation of his own country, observing, *ver.* 2. that it was the 15th year of Jehoiachin's captivity. But the Chaldee paraphrase fixes upon another Æra, and saith this was the 30th year after *Hilkiah the priest found the book of the law in the house of the sanctuary, at midnight, after the setting of the moon, in the days of Josiah the king*: And it is true, that this was just 30 years from thence; and that was an event so remarkable, as it put the Jewish state upon a new trial, that it was proper enough to date from it; and, perhaps, therefore the prophet speaks indefinitely of 30 years, as having an eye both to that event, and to the Chaldean computation, which were coincident.

It was in the *fourth month*, answering to our June, and in the *fifth day of the month*, that Ezekiel had this vision, *ver.* 2. It is probable it was on the sabbath day, because we read, *chap.* iii. 16. that *at the end of seven days*, which we may well suppose to be the next sabbath, the word of the Lord came to him again. Thus *John was in the spirit on the Lord's day*, when he *saw the visions of the Almighty*, Rev. i. 10. God would hereby put an honour upon his sabbaths, then when *the enemies mocked at them*, Lam. i. 7. And he would here thus encourage his people to keep up their attendance on the ministry of his prophets *every sabbath day*, by the extraordinary manifestations of himself on some sabbath days.

2. The melancholy circumstances he was in when God honoured him, and thereby favoured his people with this vision. He was *in the land of the Chaldeans, among the captives, by the river of Chebar, and it was in the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity.* Observe,

(1.) The people of God were now, some of them, *captives in the land of the Chaldeans:* The body of the Jewish nation yet remained in their own land, but these were the first-fruits of the captivity, and they were some of the best; for in Jeremiah's vision these were the *good figs* whom God had *sent into the land of the Chaldeans for their good*, Jer. xxiv. 5. and that it might be for their good God raised up a prophet among them, to *teach them out of the law*, then when he chastened them, *Psal.* xciv. 12. Note, It is a great mercy to have the word of God brought us, and a great duty to attend to it diligently when we are in affliction. The word of instruction and the rod of correction may be of great service to us, in concert and concurrence with each other; the word to explain the rod, and the rod to enforce the word; both together give wisdom. It is happy for a man, when he is sick and in pain to have a messenger with him, an interpreter, *one among a thousand*, if he have but his *ear open to discipline*, Job xxxiii. 23. One of the quarrels God had with the Jews, when he sent them into captivity, was for *mocking his messengers* and *misusing his prophets*; and yet when they were suffering for this sin, he favoured them with this forfeited mercy. It were ill with us if God did not sometimes graciously thrust upon us those means of grace and salvation which we have foolishly thrust from us. In their captivity they wanted ordinary helps for their souls, and therefore God raised them up these extraordinary ones; for God's children, if they be balked in their education one way, shall have it made up another way. But observe, It was in *the fifth year of the captivity* that Ezekiel was raised up among them, and not before. So long God left them without any prophet, till they began to *lament after the Lord*, and to complain that they *saw not their signs*, and there was none to *tell them how long*, Psal. lxxiv. 9. and then they would know how to value a prophet, and God's discoveries of himself to them, by him, would be the more acceptable and comfortable. The Jews that remained in their own land had Jeremiah with them, those that were gone into captivity had Ezekiel with them, for wherever the children of God are scattered abroad he will find out tutors for them.

(2.) The prophet was himself among the captives, those of them that were posted by *the river Chebar*; for it was *by the rivers of Babylon* that they *sat down*, and on the willow-trees by the river's side they *hung their harps*. Psal. cxxxvii. 2. The planters in America keep along by the sides of the rivers, and, perhaps, those captives were employed by their masters in improving some parts of the country, by the rivers sides that were uncultivated, the natives being generally employed in war; or they employed them in manufactures, and therefore chose to fix them by the sides of rivers, that the goods they made might the more easily be conveyed by water-carriage. Interpreters agree not what river this of Chebar was, but *among the captives*, by that river, Ezekiel was, and himself a captive.

Observe here, 1. That the best men, and those that are dearest to God, often share not only in the common calamities of this life, but in the publick and national judgments that are inflicted for sin; they feel the smart who contributed nothing to the guilt; by which it appears, that the difference between good and bad ariseth not from the events that are concerning them, but from the temper and disposition of their spirits under them. And since not only righteous men, but prophets, share with the worst in present punishments, we may infer from thence, with the greatest assurance, that there are rewards reserved for them in the future state. 2. Words of conviction, counsel and comfort, come best to those that are in affliction from their fellow-sufferers. The *captives* will be best instructed by one that is a *captive among them*, and experimentally knows their sorrows. 3. The spirit of prophecy was not confined to the land of Israel, but some of the brightest of divine revelations were revealed *in the land of the Chaldeans*, which was a happy presage of the carrying of the church, with that divine revelation upon which it is built, into the Gentile world; and as now, so afterwards, when the gospel kingdom was to be set up, the dispersion of the Jews contributed to the spreading of the knowledge of God. 4. Wherever we are we may keep up our communion with God, for from the remotest corners of the earth we may find a way open heavenward: *Undique ad cœlos tantundem est viæ.* 5. When God's ministers are bound, yet *the word of the Lord is not bound*, 2 Tim. ii. 9. When St. Paul was a prisoner, yet the gospel had a free course. When St. John was banished into the Isle of Patmos Christ visited him there; nay, God's suffering servants have generally been treated as favourites, and their *consolations have much more abounded*, then when *affliction has abounded*, 2 Cor. i. 5.

3. The discovery which God was pleased to make of himself to the prophet, then when he was in these circumstances, to be by him communicated to his people. He here tells us what he saw, what he heard, and what he felt.

(1.) He *saw visions of God*, ver. 1. No man can *see God and live*, but many have seen visions of God, such displays of the divine glory as have both instructed and affected them; and commonly when God first revealed himself to any prophet, he did it by an extraordinary vision, as to Isaiah, *chap.* vi. to Jeremiah, *chap.* i. to Abraham, Acts vii. 2. to settle a correspondence and a satisfactory way of intercourse, so as that there needed not afterwards a vision upon every revelation. Ezekiel was imployed in turning the hearts of the people to the Lord their God, and therefore he must himself see the visions of God. Note, It concerns those to be well acquainted with God themselves, and much affected with what they know of him, whose business it is to bring others to the knowledge and love of him. That he might see the *visions of God the heavens were opened*; the darkness and distance which hindered its visions were conquered, and he was let into the light of the glories of the upper world, as near and clear as if heaven had been opened to him.

(2.) He

(2.) He heard the voice of God, *ver.* 3. *The word of the Lord came expreſly* to him, and what he ſaw was deſigned to prepare him for what he was to hear. The expreſſion is emphatical, *Eſſendo fuit verbum dei*; *The word of the Lord was as really it was to him*, there was no miſtake in it; it came to him in the fulneſs of its light and power, in the evidence and demonſtration of the Spirit; it came cloſe to him, nay, it came into him, took poſſeſſion of him, and dwelt in him richly: It *came expreſly*, or accurately to him; he did himſelf clearly underſtand what he ſaid, and was abundantly ſatisfied of the truth of it. *The eſſential Word* (ſo we may take it) *the word who is, who is what he is, came to Ezekiel*, to ſend him on his errand.

(3.) He felt the power of God opening his eyes to ſee the viſions, opening his ear to hear the voice, and opening his heart to receive both. *The hand of the Lord was there upon him.* Note, *The hand of the Lord* goes along with *the word of the Lord*, and ſo it becomes effectual; thoſe only underſtand and *believe the report, to whom the arm of the Lord is revealed. The hand of God was upon him*, as upon Moſes, to cover him, that he ſhould not be overcome by the dazzling light and luſtre of the viſions he ſaw, *Exod.* xxxiii. 22. It *was upon him*, as upon St. John, *Rev.* i. 17. to revive and ſupport him, that he might bear up and not faint under theſe diſcoveries: That he might neither be lifted up nor caſt down with the abundance of the revelations, God's *grace is ſufficient for him*, and, in token of that, his *hand is upon him.*

4. ¶ And I looked, and behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding it ſelf, and a brightneſs *was* about it, and out of the midſt thereof as the colour of amber, out of the midſt of the fire. 5. Alſo out of the midſt thereof *came* the likeneſs of four living creatures. And this *was* their appearance, They had the likeneſs of a man. 6. And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings. 7. And their feet *were* ſtraight feet, and the ſole of their feet *was* like the ſole of a calves foot, and they ſparkled like the colour of burniſhed braſs. 8. And *they had* the hands of a man under their wings on their four ſides, and they four had their faces and their wings. 9. Their wings *were* joined one to another; they turned not when they went, they went every one ſtraight forward. 10. As for the likeneſs of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion on the right ſide, and they four had the face of an ox on the left ſide: they four alſo had the face of an eagle. 11. Thus *were* their faces: and their wings *were* ſtretched upward, two *wings* of every one *were* joined one to another, and two covered their bodies. 12. And they went every one ſtraight forward: whither the ſpirit was to go, they went: *and* they turned not when they went. 13. As for the likeneſs of the living creatures, their appearance *was* like burning coals of fire, *and* like the appearance of lamps: it went up and down among the living creatures, and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning. 14. And the living creatures ran, and returned as the appearance of a flaſh of lightning.

The viſions of God which Ezekiel here ſaw were very glorious, and had more particulars than thoſe which other prophets ſaw. The ſcope and intention of theſe viſions is,

1. To poſſeſs the prophet's mind with very great, and high, and honourable thoughts of that God, by whom he was commiſſioned, and for whom he was employed. It is *the likeneſs of the glory of the Lord* that he ſees, *ver.* 28. and from hence he may infer, it is his honour to ſerve him, for he is one whom angels ſerve; he may ſerve him with ſafety, for he hath power ſufficient to bear him out in his work; it is at his peril to draw back from his ſervice, for he hath power to purſue him, as he did Jonah; ſo great a God as this muſt be ſerved *with reverence and godly fear*; and with aſſurance may Ezekiel foretel what this God will do, for he is able to make his words good.

2. To ſtrike a terror upon the ſinners that remained in Zion, and thoſe that were already come to Babylon, who were ſecure, and bid defiance to the threatnings of Jeruſalem's ruin, as we have found in Jeremiah's prophecy, and ſhall find in this, many did: Let thoſe who ſaid, *we ſhall have peace, though we go on*, know, that *our God is a conſuming fire*, whom they cannot ſtand before. That this viſion had a reference to the deſtruction of Jeruſalem ſeems plain from *chap.* xliii. 3. where he ſaith, it was *the viſion which he ſaw when he came to deſtroy the city*, i. e. to propheſy the deſtruction of it.

3. To ſpeak comfort to thoſe that feared God, and trembled at his word, and humbled themſelves under his mighty hand; let them know, that though they are captives in Babylon, yet they have God nigh unto them; though they have not *the place of the ſanctuary* to be their glorious high throne, they have the God of the ſanctuary. Dr. Lightfoot obſerves, "That now the church is to "be planted for a long time in another country, the Lord ſhews "a glory in the midſt of them, as he had done at their firſt conſtituting into a church in the wilderneſs, and out of *a cloud and fire*, as he had done there, he ſhewed himſelf, and from between "*living creatures*, as from between the cherubims, he gives his "oracles." This put an honour upon them, by which they might value themſelves when the Chaldeans inſulted over them; and this might encourage their hopes of deliverance in due time.

Now to anſwer theſe ends, we have in theſe verſes the firſt part of the viſion, which repreſents God as attended and ſerved by an innumerable company of angels, who are all his meſſengers, his miniſters, *doing his commandments*, and *hearkening to the voice of his word*; which ſpeaks him great; as it magnifies an earthly prince to have a ſplendid retinue, and numerous armies at his command, which engageth his allies to truſt in him, and his enemies to fear him.

(1.) The introduction to this viſion of the angels is very magnificent and awakening, *ver.* 4. The prophet obſerving the heavens to open, *looked*, looked up, as it was time, to ſee what diſcoveries God would make to him. Note, When the heavens are opened, it concerns us to have our eyes open. And to clear the way, *behold, a whirlwind came out of the north*, which would drive away the interpoſing miſts of this lower region; fair weather uſes to *come out of the north*, and thence *the wind* comes that *drives away rain*: God can by a whirlwind clear the ſky and air, and produce that ſerenity of mind which is neceſſary to our communion with heaven. Yet this whirlwind was attended with *a great cloud*; when we think the clouds that ariſe from this earth are diſpelled, and we can ſee beyond them, yet ſtill there is a cloud which heavenly things are wrapt in, a cloud from above, ſo that *we cannot order our ſpeech* concerning them *by reaſon of darkneſs*. Chriſt here deſcended as he aſcended *in a cloud*. Some by this *whirlwind and cloud* underſtand the Chaldean army coming *out of the north* againſt the land of Judah, bearing down all before them as a tempeſt, and ſo it agrees with that which was ſignified by one of the firſt of Jeremiah's viſions, *Jer.* i. 14. *Out of the north an evil ſhall break forth*; but I take it here as an introduction rather to the viſion than to the ſermons. This whirlwind came to Ezekiel, as that to Elijah, 1 *Kings* xix. 11. to *prepare the way of the Lord*, and to demand attention: *He* that has eyes, *that has ears*, let him ſee, *let him hear.*

(2.) The viſion it ſelf. *A great cloud* was the vehicle of this viſion, in which it was conveyed to the prophet; for God's pavilion in which he reſts, his chariot in which he rides, is *darkneſs and thick clouds*, Pſalm xviii. 11. civ. 3. thus he *holds back the face of his throne*, leſt its dazzling light and luſtre ſhould over-power us, by *ſpreading a cloud upon it.* Now,

1. The cloud is accompanied with *a fire*, as upon mount Sinai, where God reſided in a *thick cloud*, but *the ſight of his glory was like devouring fire*, Exod. xxiv. 16, 17. and his firſt appearance to Moſes was *in a flame of fire in the buſh*; for *our God is a conſuming fire*: This was *a fire infolding it ſelf*; a globe, or orb, or wheel of fire; God being his own cauſe, his own rule, and his own end, if he be as *a fire*, he is as *a fire infolding it ſelf*, or, as ſome read it, *kindled by it ſelf.* The fire of God's glory ſhines forth, but it preſently catcheth it ſelf, for he lets us know but parts of his ways; the fire of God's wrath breaks forth, but preſently catcheth it ſelf, and the divine patience ſuffers not all his wrath to be ſtirred up. If it were not *a fire* thus *infolding it ſelf*, *O Lord, who ſhall ſtand?*

2. The fire is ſurrounded with a glory; *a brightneſs was about it*, in which it infolded it ſelf, yet it made ſome diſcovery of it ſelf; though we cannot ſee into the fire, cannot by ſearching find out God to perfection, yet we ſee the *brightneſs* that is round *about it*, the reflection of this fire from the thick cloud. Moſes might ſee God's back-parts, but not his face; we have ſome light concerning the nature of God from the brightneſs which encompaſſeth it, though we have not an inſight into it, by reaſon of the cloud ſpread upon it. Nothing more eaſy than to determine that God is; nothing more difficult than to deſcribe what he is. When God diſplays his wrath as fire, yet there is *a brightneſs about it*; for his holineſs and juſtice appear very illuſtrious in the puniſhment of ſin and ſinners: Even about the *devouring fire* there is *a brightneſs*, which glorified ſaints will for ever admire.

3. Out of this fire there ſhines *the colour of amber*; we are not told who or what it was that had this *colour of amber*, and therefore I take it to be the whole frame of the following viſion, which came into Ezekiel's view *out of the midſt of the fire and brightneſs*; and the firſt thing he took notice of before he viewed the particulars was, that it was *of the colour of amber*, or, *the eye of amber*, i. e. it looked as amber doth to the eye, of a bright flaming fiery colour, the colour of *a burning coal*, ſo ſome think it ſhould be read. The *living creatures* which he ſaw coming *out of the midſt of the fire* were ſeraphims, burners, for *he maketh his angels ſpirits, his miniſters a flaming fire.*

4. That which comes out of the fire, of a fiery amber colour, when it comes to be diſtinctly viewed, is *the likeneſs of four living creatures*; not the *living creatures* themſelves, angels are ſpirits, and cannot be ſeen, but *the likeneſs* of them, ſuch a hieroglyphick or repreſentation as God ſaw fit to make uſe of for the leading of the prophet, and us with him, into ſome acquaintance with the

world

world of angels (a matter purely of divine revelation) ſo far as is requiſite to poſſeſs us with an awful ſenſe of the greatneſs of that God who hath angels for his attendants, and the goodneſs of that God who hath appointed them to be attendants on his people. *The likeneſs of theſe living creatures came out of the midſt of the fire*, for angels derive their being and power from God; they are in themſelves, and are to us what he is pleaſed to make them; their glory is a ray of his. The prophet himſelf explains this viſion, *chap.* x. 20. *I know that the living creatures were the cherubims*, which is one of the names by which the angels are known in ſcripture. To Daniel was made known their numbers, *ten thouſand times ten thouſand*, Dan. vii. 10. But though they are many, yet they are one, and that is made known to Ezekiel here; they are one in nature and operation, as an army conſiſting of thouſands, is yet called a body of men. We have here an account of, (1.) Their nature, they are living creatures, they are the creatures of God, the work of his hands, their being is derived, they have not life in and of themſelves, but receive it from him, who is *the Fountain of life*. As much as the living creatures of this lower world excel the vegetables that are the ornaments of the earth, ſo much do the angels, the living creatures of the upper world, excel the ſun, moon, and ſtars, the ornaments of the heavens. The ſun, ſay ſome, is a flame of *fire infolding it ſelf*, but it is not a living creature, as angels, thoſe flames of fire, are. Angels are living wights, living beings, emphatically ſo; men on earth are dying creatures, dying daily, *in the midſt of life we are in death*, but angels in heaven are living creatures, they live indeed, live to good purpoſe, and when ſaints come to be *equal unto the angels*, they ſhall not *die any more*, Luke xx. 36.

(2.) Their number, they are four, ſo they appear here though they are innumerable, not as if theſe were four particular angels ſet up above the reſt, as ſome have fondly imagined, Michael and Gabriel, Raphael and Uriel, but for the ſake of the four faces they put on, and to inſinuate their being ſent forth towards *the four winds of heaven*, Matt. xxiv. 31. and Zechariah ſees them as four chariots going forth, eaſt, weſt, north and ſouth, *Zech.* vi. 1. God has meſſengers to ſend each way, for his kingdom is univerſal, and reacheth to all parts of the world.

(3.) Their qualifications, by which they are fitted for the ſervice of their Maker and Maſter. Theſe are ſet forth figuratively, and by ſimilitude, as is proper in viſions, which are parables to the eye. Their deſcription here is ſuch, and ſo expreſſed, as that, I think, it is not poſſible by it to form an exact idea of them in our fancies, or with the pencil, for that would be a temptation to worſhip them; but the ſeveral inſtances of their fitneſs for the work they are employed in, are intended in the ſeveral parts of this deſcription. Note, It is the greateſt honour of God's creatures to be in a capacity of anſwering the end of their creation; and the more ready we are to every good work, the nearer we approach to the dignity of angels.

Theſe living creatures are deſcribed here,

1. By their general appearance, *they had the likeneſs of a man*, they appeared for the main in a human ſhape, 1. To ſignify that theſe living creatures are reaſonable creatures, intelligent beings, who have that *ſpirit of a man* which is the *candle of the Lord*. 2. To put an honour upon the nature of man, who is made the lower, yet but *a little lower than the angels*, in the very next rank of beings below them; when the inviſible intelligences of the upper world would make themſelves viſible, it is in *the likeneſs of man*. 3. To intimate that their *delights are with the ſons of men*, as their maſters are, *Prov.* viii. 31. that they do ſervice to men, and men may have a ſpiritual communion with them by faith, hope, and holy love. 4. The angels of God appear in *the likeneſs of man*, becauſe in *the fulneſs of time* the Son of God was not only to appear in that likeneſs, but to aſſume that nature; they therefore ſhew this love to it.

2. By their faces, *every one had four faces*, looking four ſeveral ways. In St. John's viſion, which has a near affinity with this, each of the four living creatures has one of theſe faces here mentioned, *Rev.* iv. 7. here each of them has all four, to intimate, that they have all the ſame qualifications for ſervice, though, perhaps, among the angels of heaven, as among the angels of the churches, ſome excel in one gift, and others in another, but all for the common ſervice. Let us contemplate their faces till we be in ſome meaſure changed into the ſame image, that we may do the will of God as the angels do it in heaven. They all *four had the face of a man*, for in that likeneſs they appeared, *ver.* 5. but, beſides that, they had *the face of a lion*, *an ox*, and *an eagle*, each maſterly in their kind; *the lion* among wild beaſts, *the ox* among tame ones, and *the eagle* among fowls, *ver.* 10. Doth God make uſe of them for the executing of judgments upon his enemies? they are fierce and ſtrong as the lion and the eagle in tearing their prey: Doth he make uſe of them for the good of his people? they are as *oxen ſtrong for labour*, and inclined to ſerve: And in both they have *the underſtanding of a man*. The ſcattered perfections of the living creatures on earth meet in the angels of heaven: They have *the likeneſs of a man*; but becauſe there are ſome things in which man is excelled even by the inferior creatures, they are therefore compared to ſome of them; they have *the underſtanding of a man*, and ſuch as far exceeds it; they alſo reſemble man in tenderneſs and humanity; but, 1. *A lion* excels a man in ſtrength and boldneſs, and is much more formidable, therefore the angels, who do ſo too, put on *the face of a lion*. 2. *An ox* excels man in diligence and patience, and pains-taking, and an unwearied diſcharge of the work he has to do; therefore the angels, who are conſtantly employed in the ſervice of God and the church, put on *the face of an ox*. 3. *An eagle* excels man in quickneſs and piercingneſs of ſight, and in ſoaring high, and therefore the angels, who ſeek things above, and ſee far into divine myſteries, put on *the face of a flying eagle*.

3. By their wings, *every one had four wings*, ver. 6. In the viſion Iſaiah had of them, they appeared with ſix, now with four; for they appeared above the throne, and had occaſion for two to cover their faces with. The angels are fitted with wings to fly ſwiftly on God's errands; whatever buſineſs God ſends them upon they loſe no time. Faith and hope are the ſoul's wings upon which it ſoars upwards, pious and devout affections are its wings on which it is carried forward with vigour and alacrity. The prophet obſerves here concerning their wings, 1. That they were *joined one to another*, ver. 9. and again, *ver.* 11. They did not make uſe of their wings for fighting, as ſome birds do, there is no conteſt among the angels, God maketh *peace*, perfect peace, *in his high places*; but their wings were joined in token of their perfect unity and unanimity, and the univerſal agreement there is among them. 2. That *they were ſtretched upward*, extended, and ready for uſe, not folded up, or flagging. Let an angel receive the leaſt intimation of the divine will, and he has nothing to ſeek, but is upon the wing preſently; while our poor dull ſouls are like the oſtrich, that with much difficulty lifteth up her ſelf on high. 3. That two of their wings were made uſe of in covering their bodies, the ſpiritual bodies they aſſumed. The clothes that cover us are our hindrance in work, angels need no other covering but their own wings, which are their furtherance. They cover their bodies from us, ſo forbidding us needleſs enquiries concerning them; ask not after them, for *they are wonderful*, Judg. xiii. 18. They cover them before God, ſo directing us, when we approach to God, to ſee to it that we be ſo clothed with Chriſt's righteouſneſs, as *that the ſhame of our nakedneſs may not appear*.

4. By their feet, including their legs and thighs; they were *ſtraight feet*, ver. 7. they ſtood ſtraight, and firm, and ſteady, no burthen of ſervice could make their legs to bend under them. The ſpouſe makes this part of the deſcription of her beloved, that *his legs* were *as pillars of marble ſet upon ſockets of fine gold*, Cant. v. 15. ſuch are the angels legs. *The ſole of their feet was like* that *of a calves foot*, which divideth the hoof, and is therefore clean: *As it were the ſole of a round foot*, as the Chaldee words it, they were ready for motion any way. *Their feet were winged*, ſo the Seventy; they went ſo ſwiftly, that it was as if they flew. And their very feet *ſparkled like the colour of burniſhed braſs*; not only the faces, but the very feet of thoſe are beautiful whom God ſends on his errands, *Iſa.* lii. 7. every ſtep the angels take is glorious. In the viſion John had of Chriſt it is ſaid, *his feet were like unto fine braſs, as if they burned in a furnace*, Rev. i. 15.

5. By their hands, *ver.* 8. *They had the hands of a man under their wings on their four ſides*; an arm and hand under every wing: They had not only wings for motion, but hands for action: Many are quick that are not active; they hurry about a great deal, but do nothing to purpoſe, bring nothing to paſs: They have wings but no hands, whereas God's ſervants the angels not only go when he ſends them, and come when he calls them, but do what he bids them. They are *the hands of a man*, which are wonderfully made, and fitted for ſervice; which are guided by reaſon and underſtanding; for what angels do they do intelligently, and with judgment. They have calves feet, which ſpeaks the ſwiftneſs of their motion; the cedars of Lebanon are ſaid to *ſkip like a calf*, Pſalm xxix. 6. but they have a man's hand, which ſpeaks the niceneſs and exactneſs of their performances; as the heavens are ſaid to be the work of God's fingers. Their hands were *under their wings*, which concealed them, as they did the reſt of their bodies. Note, The agency of angels is a ſecret thing, and their work is carried on in an inviſible way. In working for God, though we muſt not, with *the ſluggard, hide our hand in our boſom*, yet we muſt, with the humble, *not let our left hand know what our right hand doth*. We may obſerve, that where theſe wings were, their hands were *under their wings*; wherever their wings carried them, they carried hands along with them, to be ſtill doing ſomething ſuitable, ſomething that the duty of the place requires.

(4.) Their motions. The living creatures are moving; angels are active beings; it is not their happineſs to ſit ſtill and do nothing, but to be always well employed; and we muſt reckon our ſelves then beſt, when we are doing good; doing it as the angels do it; of whom it is here obſerved,

1. That whatever ſervice they went about, *they went every one ſtraight forward*, ver. 9. and again, *ver.* 12. which intimates, (1.) That they ſincerely aimed at the glory of God, and had a ſingle eye to that in all they did; their going *ſtraight forward* ſuppoſeth that they looked ſtraight forward, and never had any ſiniſter intentions in what they did. And if thus *our eye be ſingle*, our *whole body will be full of light*; the ſingleneſs of the eye is the ſincerity of the heart. (2.) That they were intent upon the ſervice they were employed in, and did it with a cloſe application of mind; they went forward with their work; for what their hand found to do they did it

it *with all their might*, and did not loiter in it. (3.) That they were unanimous in it, *they went straight forward*, every one about his own work, and did not thwart or juſtle one another, did not ſtand in one another's light, in one another's way. (4.) That they perfectly underſtood their buſineſs, and were throughly apprized of it, ſo that they needed not to ſtand ſtill to pauſe or heſitate, but work their work before them with readineſs, as thoſe that knew what they had to do, and how to do it. (5.) They were ſteady and conſtant in their work, they did not fluctuate, did not tire, did not vary, but were of a piece with themſelves; they moved in a direct line, and ſo went the next way to work in all they did, and loſt no time. When we go ſtraight we go forward; when we ſerve God with one heart, we rid ground, we rid work.

2. *They turned not when they went*, ver. 9. and again, *ver.* 12. (1.) They made no blunders or miſtakes, which would give them occaſion to turn back to rectify them; their work needed no correction, and therefore needed not to be gone over again. (2.) They minded no diverſions; as they turned not back, ſo they turned not aſide, to trifle with any thing that was foreign to their buſineſs.

3. *They went whither the ſpirit was to go*, ver. 12. either, (1.) *Whither* their own *ſpirit was* diſpoſed *to go*, thither *they went*, having no bodies, as we have, to clog or hinder them. It is our infelicity, and daily burthen, that when *the ſpirit is willing*, yet *the fleſh is weak*, and cannot keep pace with it, ſo that *the good which we would do we do it not*; but angels, and glorified ſaints, labour under no ſuch impotency, but whatever they incline or intend to do, they do it, and never come ſhort of it. Or rather, (2.) Whereſoever *the Spirit* of God would have them *go*, thither *they went*; though they had ſo much wiſdom of their own, yet in all their motions and actions they ſubjected themſelves to the conduct and government of the divine will: Whitherſoever the divine providence *was to go*, *they went*, to ſerve its purpoſes, and to execute its orders. The Spirit of God (ſaith Mr. Greenhill) is the great agent that ſets angels to work, and it is their honour that they are led, they are eaſily *led by the Spirit*. See, how tractable and obſequious theſe noble creatures are! whitherſoever *the Spirit* is *to go*, they go immediately, with all poſſible alacrity. Note, Thoſe that *walk after the Spirit*, do the will of God as the angels do it.

4. They *ran*, *and returned like a flaſh of lightning*, ver. 14. This intimates, 1. That they made haſte; they were quick in their motions, as quick as lightning; whatever buſineſs they went about, they diſpatched it preſently, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. Happy they that have no bodies to retard their motion in holy exerciſes! and happy ſhall we be when we come to have ſpiritual bodies for ſpiritual work! Satan *falls like lightning* into his own ruin, *Luke* x. 18. Angels fly *like lightning* in their Maſter's work; the angel Gabriel flew ſwiftly. 2. That they made haſte back; they *ran*, *and returned*; ran to do their work, and execute their orders, and then returned to give an account of what they had done, and receive new inſtructions, that they may be always doing. They *ran* into the lower world to do what was to be done there, but when they had done it, they *returned like a flaſh of lightning* to the upper world again, to the beatifick viſion of their God, which they could not with any patience be longer from than their ſervice did require. Thus we ſhould be in the affairs of this world as out of our element; though we run into them, we muſt not repoſe in them, but our ſouls muſt preſently return like lightning to God their reſt and centre.

Laſtly, We have an account of the light by which the prophet ſaw theſe living creatures, or the looking-glaſs in which he ſaw them, *ver.* 13. 1. He ſaw them by their own light, for *their appearance was like burning coals of fire*; they are ſeraphims, burners; noting the ardor of their love to God, their fervent zeal in his ſervice, their ſplendor and brightneſs, and their terror againſt God's enemies; when God employs them to fight his battles, they are as *coals of fire*, Pſal. xviii. 12. to *devour the adverſaries*, as lightnings ſhot out to diſcomfit them. 2. He ſaw them by the light of ſome *lamps*, which *went up and down among* them, the ſhining whereof *was* very *bright*. Satan's works are works of darkneſs, he is *the ruler of the darkneſs of this world*; but the angels of light are in the light, and though they conceal their working, they ſhew their work, for it will bear the light. But we ſee them and their works only by candle-light, by the dim light *of lamps*, that go *up and down among* them; when *the day breaks*, *and the ſhadows flee away*, we ſhall ſee them clearly. Some make the *appearance* of theſe *burning coals*, and of the *lightning* that iſſues *out of the fire*, to ſignify the wrath of God, and his judgments, that were now to be executed upon Judah and Jeruſalem for their ſins, in which angels were to be employed: And accordingly we find afterwards *coals of fire ſcattered upon the city* to conſume it, which were *fetched from between the cherubims*, chap. x. 2. But by *the appearance of the lamps* then we may underſtand the light of comfort which ſhone forth to the people of God in the darkneſs of this preſent trouble: If the miniſtry of the angels is as a conſuming fire to God's enemies, it is as a rejoicing light to his own children. To the one this *fire* is *bright*, it is very reviving and refreſhing; to the other *out of the fire* comes freſh *lightning* to deſtroy them. Note, Good angels are our friends or enemies according as God is.

15. ¶ Now as I beheld the living creatures, behold, one wheel upon the earth by the living creatures, with his four faces. 16. The appearance of the wheels, and their work *was* like unto the colour of a beryl: and they four had one likeneſs, and their appearance and their work *was* as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel. 17. When they went, they went upon their four ſides: *and* they returned not when they went. 18. As for their rings, they were ſo high that they were dreadful, and their rings *were* full of eyes round about them four. 19. And when the living creatures went, the wheels went by them: and when the living creatures were lift up from the earth, the wheels were lift up. 20. Whitherſoever the ſpirit *was* to go, they went, thither *was their* ſpirit to go, and the wheels were lifted up over againſt them: for the ſpirit of the living creature *was* in the wheels. 21. When thoſe went, *theſe* went; and when thoſe ſtood, *theſe* ſtood; and when thoſe were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up over againſt them: for the ſpirit of the living creature *was* in the wheels. 22. And the likeneſs of the firmament upon the heads of the living creature, *was* as the colour of the terrible cryſtal, ſtretched forth over their heads above. 23. And under the firmament *were* their wings ſtraight, the one toward the other; every one had two, which covered on this ſide, and every one had two, which covered on that ſide, their bodies. 24. And when they went, I heard the noiſe of their wings, like the noiſe of great waters, as the voice of the Almighty, the voice of ſpeech as the noiſe of an hoſt: when they ſtood, they let down their wings. 25. And there was a voice from the firmament, that *was* over their heads, when they ſtood, *and* had let down their wings.

The prophet is very exact in making and recording his obſervations concerning this viſion. And here we have,

(1.) The notice he took of the *wheels*, ver. 15,—21. The glory of God appears not only in the ſplendor of his retinue in the upper world, but in the ſteadineſs of his government here in this lower world. Having ſeen how God doth according to his will in the armies of heaven, let us now ſee how he doth according to it among the inhabitants of the earth; for there, *on the earth*, the prophet ſaw the *wheels*, ver. 15. *As he beheld the living creatures*, and was contemplating the glory of that viſion, and receiving inſtruction from it, this other viſion preſented it ſelf to his view. Note, Thoſe who make a good uſe of the diſcoveries God has favoured them with, may expect further diſcoveries; for *to him that hath ſhall be given*. We are ſometimes tempted to think there is nothing glorious but what is in the upper world, whereas, could we with an eye of faith diſcern the beauty of providence, and the wiſdom, power, and goodneſs which ſhine in the adminiſtration of that kingdom, we would ſee and ſay, *Verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth*, and acts like himſelf. There are many things in this viſion, which give us ſome light concerning the divine providence.

1. The diſpenſations of providence are compared to *wheels*, either the wheels of a chariot, in which the conqueror rides in triumph, or rather the wheels of a clock or watch, which all contribute to the regular motion of the machine. We read of *the courſe* or *wheel of nature*, Jam. iii. 6. which is here ſet before us as under the direction of the God of nature. *Wheels*, though they move not of themſelves, as *the living creatures* do, yet they are made moveable, and are almoſt continually kept in action. Providence, repreſented by theſe *wheels*, orders, changes, ſometimes one ſpoke of the wheel is uppermoſt, and ſometimes another; but the motion of the wheel on its own axletree, like that of the orbs above, is very regular and ſteady. The motion of the wheels is circular; by the revolutions of providence things are brought to the ſame poſture and paſs which they were in formerly; for *the thing that is*, *is that which has been*, *and there is no new thing under the ſun*, Eccl. i. 9, 10.

2. The *wheel* is ſaid to be *by the living creatures*, who attended it to direct its motion; for the angels are employed as the miniſters of God's providence, and have a greater hand in directing the motions of ſecond cauſes to ſerve the divine purpoſe than we think they have. Such a cloſe connection is there between *the living creatures* and the *wheels*, that they moved and reſted together. Were angels buſily employed? men were buſily employed, as inſtruments in their hand, whether of mercy or judgment, though they themſelves were not aware of it: Or, are men active to compaſs their deſigns? angels at the ſame time are acting to controll and overrule them. This is much inſiſted on here, *ver.* 19. *When the living creatures went*, to bring about any buſineſs, *the wheels went by them*; when God has work to do by the miniſtry of angels, ſecond cauſes are all found or made ready to concur in it; and, *ver.* 21. *when theſe ſtood*, *theſe ſtood*; when the angels had done their work, the ſecond cauſes had done theirs. If *the living creatures were lifted up from the*

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the earth, were elevated to any ſervice above the common courſe of nature, and out of the ordinary road, as ſuppoſe in the working of miracles, the dividing of the water, the ſtanding ſtill of the ſun, *the wheels*, contrary to their own natural tendency, which is towards the earth, move in concert with them, and *are lifted up over againſt them*; this is thrice mentioned, *ver.* 19, 20, 21. Note, All inferior creatures are, and move, and act, as the Creator, by the miniſtration of angels, directs and influences them. Viſible effects are managed and governed by inviſible cauſes.

The reaſon given of this is, becauſe *the ſpirit of the living creatures was in the wheels*, i. e. the ſame wiſdom, power, and holineſs of God, the ſame will and counſel of his, that guides and governs the angels, and all their performances, doth, by them, order and diſpoſe of all the motions of the creatures in this lower world, and the events and iſſues of them. God is the Soul of the world, and animates the whole, both that above, and that beneath, ſo that they move in perfect harmony, as the upper and lower parts of the natural body do; ſo that *whitherſoever the Spirit is to go*, i. e. whatever it is God's will and purpoſe ſhould be done, and brought to paſs, *thither their ſpirit is to go*, i. e. the angels, knowingly and deſignedly, ſet themſelves to bring it about, and *their ſpirit is in the wheels*, which are therefore *lifted up over againſt them*, i. e. both the powers of nature, and the wills of men, are all made to ſerve the intention, which they infallibly and irreſiſtibly effect, though, perhaps, *they mean not ſo, neither doth their heart think ſo*, Iſa. x. 7. Mic. iv. 11, 12. Thus, though the will of God's precept be not *done on earth, as it is done in heaven*, yet, the will of his purpoſe and counſel is, and ſhall be.

3. The *wheel* is ſaid to have *four faces*, looking four ſeveral ways, *ver.* 15. noting that the providence of God exerts it ſelf in all parts of the world, eaſt, weſt, north and ſouth, and extends it ſelf to the remoteſt corners of it. Look which way you will upon the *wheel* of providence, and it has a *face* towards you, a beautiful one, which you may admire the features and complexion of; it looks upon you as ready to ſpeak to you, if you be but ready to hear the voice of it; like a well-drawn picture, it has an eye upon all that has an eye upon it.

The *wheel* had ſo *four faces*, that it had in it *four wheels*, which *went upon their four ſides*, ver. 17. At firſt Ezekiel ſaw it as *one wheel*, ver. 15. one ſphere, but afterwards he ſaw it was *four*, but *they four had one likeneſs*, ver. 16. not only they were like one another, but they were as if they had been one. This intimates, 1. That one event of providence is like another; what happens to us is *that which is common to men*, and what we are not to think ſtrange. 2. That various events have a tendency to the ſame iſſue, and concur to anſwer the ſame intention.

4. *Their appearance and their work* is ſaid to be *like the colour of a beryl*, ver. 16. *the colour of Tarſhiſh*, ſo the word is, *i. e.* of the ſea; the beryl is of that colour, ſea-green; blue Neptune we call it. The nature of things in this world is like that of the ſea, which is in a continual flux, and yet there is a conſtant coherence and ſucceſſion of its parts. There is a chain of events which is always in the drawing one way or other. The ſea ebbs and flows, ſo doth providence in its diſpoſals, but always in the ſtated appointed times and meaſures. The ſea looks blue, as the air doth, becauſe of the ſhortneſs and feebleneſs of our ſight, which can ſee but a little way of either; to that colour therefore is *the appearance and work* of providence fitly compared, becauſe we cannot find out that which God doth *from the beginning to the end*, Eccl. iii. 11. we ſee but *parts of his ways*, Job xxvi. *ult.* and all beyond looks blue, which gives us to underſtand no more concerning it, but that in truth we ken it not, it is *far above out of our ſight*.

5. *Their appearance and their work* is likewiſe ſaid to be *as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel*. Obſerve, here again *their appearance* to the prophet is deſigned to ſet forth what *their work* really is; mens *appearance and their work* often differ, but the *appearance* of God's providence and its *work* agree; if they ſeem to differ, it is through our ignorance and miſtake. Now both *were as a wheel in a wheel*, a leſſer wheel moved by a greater; we pretend not to give a mathematical deſcription of it; the meaning is, that the diſpoſals of providence ſeem to us intricate and perplexed, and unaccountable, and yet they will appear in the iſſue to have been all wiſely ordered for the beſt; ſo that though *what God doth we know not now*, yet *we ſhall know hereafter*, John xiii. 7.

6. The motion of theſe *wheels*, like that of *the living creatures*, was ſteady, and regular, and conſtant, *they returned not when they went*, ver. 17. becauſe they never went amiſs, nor otherwiſe than they ſhould do. God, in his providence, takes his work before him, and he will have it forward; and it is going on even then when it ſeems to us to be going backward. *They went* as the Spirit directed them, and therefore *returned not*. We ſhould not have occaſion to return back as we have, and to undo that by repentance which we have done amiſs, and to do it over again, if we were but *led by the Spirit*, and followed his conduct. *The ſpirit of life* (ſo ſome read it) *was in the wheels*, which carried them on with eaſe and evenneſs, and then *they returned not when they went*.

7. The *rings* or rims *of the wheels were ſo high that they were dreadful*, ver. 18. They were of a vaſt circumference, ſo that when they were reared and put in motion, the prophet was even afraid to look upon them. Note, The vaſt compaſs of God's thought, and the vaſt reach of his deſign, is really aſtoniſhing; when we go about to deſcribe the circle of providence, we are ſtruck with amazement, and are even ſwallowed up. O the heighth and depth of God's counſels! the conſideration whereof ſhould ſtrike an awe upon us.

8. They were *full of eyes round about*. This circumſtance of the viſion is moſt ſurprizing of all, and yet moſt ſignificant, plainly ſpeaking that the motions of providence are all directed by infinite wiſdom. The iſſues of things are not determined by a blind fortune, but by thoſe *eyes of the Lord* which *run to and fro through the earth*, and *are in every place beholding the evil and the good*. Note, It is a great ſatisfaction to us, and ought to be ſo, that though we cannot account for the ſprings and tendencies of events, yet they are all under the cognizance and conduct of an all-wiſe, all-ſeeing God.

(2.) The notice he took of *the firmament* above, *over the heads of the living creatures*. When he ſaw *the living creatures* moving, and *the wheels by* them, he looked up, as it is proper for us to do when we obſerve the various motions of providence in this lower world; looking up, he ſaw *the firmament ſtretched forth over the heads of the living creatures*, ver. 22. What is done on earth, is done under the heaven (as the ſcripture often ſpeaks) under its inſpection and influence.

Obſerve, 1. What he ſaw: *The firmament was as the colour of the terrible cryſtal*, truly glorious, but terribly ſo; the vaſtneſs and brightneſs of it put the prophet into an amazement, and ſtruck him with an awful reverence. *The terrible ice*, or *froſt*, ſo it may be read; the colour of ſnow congealed, or, as mountains of ice in the northern ſeas, which are very frightful. Daring ſinners ask, *Can God judge through the dark cloud?* Job xxii. 13. but that which we take to be a *dark cloud*, is to him tranſparent as *cryſtal*, through which, *from the place of his habitation, he looks upon all the inhabitants of the earth*, Pſalm xxxiii. 14. *Under the firmament* he ſaw *the wings of the living creatures* erect, *ver.* 23. when they pleaſed, they uſed them either for flight or for covering, or two for flight, and two for covering. God is on high, *above the firmament*, the angels are *under the firmament*, which notes their ſubjection to God's dominion, and their readineſs to fly on his errands *in the open firmament of heaven*, and to ſerve him unanimouſly.

2. What he heard.

(1.) He heard the *noiſe of the angels wings*, ver. 24. Bees and other inſects make a great noiſe with the vibration of their wings; here the angels do ſo, to awaken the attention of the prophet to that which God was about to ſay to him from *the firmament*, ver. 25. Angels, by the providences they are employed in, ſound God's alarms to the children of men, and ſtir them up to *hear his voice*; for that is it that *cries in the city*, and is heard and underſtood by *the men of wiſdom*. *The noiſe of their wings* was loud and terrible, *as the noiſe of great waters*, like the rout or roaring of the ſea; and *as the noiſe of an hoſt*, the noiſe of war; but it was articulate and intelligible, and did not *give an uncertain ſound*; for it was *the voice of ſpeech*; nay, it was *as the voice of the Almighty*; for God, by his providences, *ſpeaks once, yea, twice*; if we could but *perceive it*, Job xxxiii. 14. the *Lord's voice cries*, Mic. vi. 9.

(2.) He heard a *voice from the firmament*, from him that ſits upon the throne there, *ver.* 25. When the angels moved, they *made a noiſe with their wings*, but when with that they had rouzed a careleſs world, they ſtood ſtill, and *let down their wings*, that there might be a profound ſilence, and ſo God's voice might be the better heard. The voice of providence is deſigned to open mens ears to the voice of the word, to do the office of the crier, that with a loud voice charges ſilence while the judge paſſeth ſentence. *He that has ears to hear, let him hear.* Note, Noiſes on earth ſhould awaken our attention to the *voice from the firmament*; for *how ſhall we eſcape, if we turn away from him that ſpeaks from heaven!*

26. ¶ And above the firmament that *was* over their heads, *was* the likeneſs of a throne, as the appearance of a ſapphire-ſtone, and upon the likeneſs of the throne *was* the likeneſs as the appearance of a man above upon it. 27. And I ſaw as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it: from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I ſaw as it were the appearance of fire, and it *had* brightneſs round about. 28. As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, ſo *was* the appearance of the brightneſs round about. This *was* the appearance of the likeneſs of the glory of the LORD: and when I ſaw *it*, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that ſpake.

All the other parts of this viſion were but a preface and introduction to this. God in them had made himſelf known as Lord of angels, and ſupreme Director of all his affairs of this lower world, from whence it is eaſy to infer, that whatever God by his prophets either promiſeth or threatneth to do, he is able to effect it; angels are his ſervants, men are his tools. But now a divine revelation is

to

to be given to a prophet, and by him to the church, we must look higher than the living creatures of the wheels, and must expect that from the eternal Word, of whom we have an account in these verses. Ezekiel hearing a voice from the firmament looked up, as John did, to *see the voice that spake with him*, and he *saw one like unto the Son of Man*, Rev. i. 22, 13. The second Person sometimes tried the *fashion of a man*, occasionally, before he clothed himself with it for good and all; and the spirit of prophecy is called the *Spirit of Christ*, 1 Pet. i. 11. and the *Testimony of Jesus*, Rev. xix. 10.

1. This glory of Christ that the prophet saw *was above the firmament* that was *over the heads* of the living creatures, *ver.* 26. Note, The heads of angels themselves are under the feet of the Lord Jesus; for the firmament that is over their heads is under his feet; *angels, principalities and powers are made subject to him*, 1 *Pet.* iii. 22. This dignity and dominion of the Redeemer before his incarnation magnifies his condescension in his incarnation, when he was *made a little lower than the angels*, Heb. ii. 9.

2. The first thing he observed was a *throne*, for divine revelation comes backed and supported with a royal authority; we must have an eye of faith to God and Christ as upon a *throne*. The first thing that John discovered in his visions was *a throne set in heaven*, Rev. iv. 2. which commands reverence and subjection. It is a throne of glory, a throne of grace, a throne of triumph, a throne of government, a throne of judgment: *The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens*, has prepared it for his Son, whom he hath set *King on his holy hill of Zion*.

3. On the throne he saw *the appearance of a man*. This is good news to the children of men, that the *throne above the firmament* is filled with one that is not ashamed to appear, even there, in the likeness of man. Daniel, in vision, saw the kingdom and dominion given to one *like the Son of Man*, who therefore hath *authority given him to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man*, John v. 27. so appearing in these visions.

4. The prince and judge upon this throne, though he appear *in fashion as a man*, yet he appears in more than human glory, *ver.* 27. (1.) Is God a *shining light?* so is he when the prophet saw him, he saw *as the colour of amber*, that is, a brightness round about; for God dwells in light, and *covers himself with light as with a garment*. How low did the Redeemes stoop for us, when, to bring about our salvation, he suffered his glory to be eclipsed by the veil of his humanity. (2.) Is God a *consuming fire?* so is he: from his loins, both upward and downward, there was the *appearance of fire*. The fire above the loins was *round about within the amber*, it was inward and involved; that below the loins was more outward and open, and yet that also had *brightness round about*. Some make the former to signify Christ's divine nature, the glory and virtue of which is hid within the *colour of amber*; it is what no man has seen, or can see; the latter his human nature, the glory of which there were those that saw; the glory as of *the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth*, John i. 14. He had *rays coming out of his hand*, and yet *there was the hiding of his power*, Hab. iii. 4. The fire in which the Son of man appeared here might be intended to signify the judgments that were ready to be executed upon Judah and Jerusalem, coming from that *fiery indignation* of the Almighty which *devours the adversaries*. Nothing more dreadful to the most daring sinners than *the wrath of him that sits upon the throne, and of the Lamb*, Rev. vi. 16. The day is coming when *the Lord Jesus shall be revealed in flaming fire*, 2Thes. i. 7, 8. It concerns us therefore *to kiss the Son lest he be angry*.

5. The throne is surrounded with a rainbow, *ver.* 28. it is so in St. John's vision, *Rev.* iv. 3. the brightness about it was of divers colours, *as the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain*; which, as it is a display of majesty, and looks very great, so it is a pledge of mercy, and looks very kind; for it is a confirmation of the gracious promise God has made, that he will not drown the world again; and he hath said, he *will look upon the bow and remember the covenant*, Gen. ix. 16. This intimates, that he who *sits upon the throne* is the *mediator of the covenant*, that his dominion is for our protection, not our destruction; that he interposeth between us and the judgments our sins have deserved; and that *all the promises of God are in him yea and amen*. Now the fire of God's wrath was breaking out against Jerusalem, bounds should be set to it, and he would not make an utter destruction of it, for he would *look upon the bow and remember the covenant*, as he promised in such a case, *Lev.* xxvi. 42.

Lastly, We have the conclusion of this vision:

1. What notion the prophet himself had of it: *This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord*. Here, as all along, he is careful to guard against all gross corporeal thoughts of God, which might derogate from the transcendent purity of his nature. He doth not say, *This was the Lord*, for he is invisible, but, *This was the glory of the Lord*, in which he was pleased to manifest himself a glorious Being; yet it is not *the glory of the Lord*, but the likeness of that glory, some faint resemblance of it: nor is it any adequate likeness of that glory, but only the appearance of that likeness, a shadow of it, and not the very *image of the thing*, Heb. x. 1.

2. What impressions it made upon him; *when I saw it I fell upon my face*. (1.) He was overpowered by it, the dazzling lustre of it conquered him and threw him upon his face; for *who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?* Or rather, (2.) He prostrated himself, in an humble sense of his own unworthiness of the honour now done him, and of the infinite distance which he now, more than ever, perceived to be between him and God; he fell upon his face, in token of that holy awe and reverence of God which his mind was possessed and filled with. Note, The more God is pleased to make known of himself to us, the more low we should be before him. He *fell upon his face* to adore the majesty of God, and to implore his mercy, and to deprecate the wrath he saw ready to break out against the children of his people.

3. What instructions he had from it: all he saw was only to prepare him for that which he was to hear, for *faith comes by hearing*: he therefore *heard a voice of one that spake*; for we are taught by words, not meerly by hieroglyphicks. When he *fell on his face* ready to receive the word, then he *heard the voice of one that spake*; for God delights to teach the humble.

CHAP. II.

What our Lord Jesus said to St. Paul, Acts xxvi. 16. *may fitly be applied to the prophet Ezekiel, to whom the same Jesus is here speaking,* Rise and stand upon thy feet, for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister. *We have here Ezekiel's ordination to his office, which the vision was designed to fit him for; not to entertain his curiosity with uncommon speculations, but to put him into business. Now here,* 1. *He is commissioned to go as a prophet to the house of Israel, now captives in Babylon, and to deliver God's messages to them from time to time,* ver. 1,—5, 2. *He is cautioned not to be afraid of them,* ver. 6. 3. *He is instructed what to say to them, and has words put into his mouth, which is signified by the vision of a roll which he was ordered to eat,* ver. 7,—10. *and which, in the next chapter, we find he did eat.*

1. AND he said unto me, Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee. 2. And the spirit entred into me, when he spake unto me, and set me upon my feet, that I heard him that spake unto me. 3. And he said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against me; they and their fathers have transgressed against me, *even* unto this very day. 4. For *they are* impudent children and stiff-hearted: I do send thee unto them, and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith th LORD God. 5. And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, (for they *are* a rebellious house) yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them.

The title here given to Ezekiel, as often afterwards, is very observable; God, when he speaks to him, calls him, *Son of man*, ver. 1, 3. *Son of Adam, Son of the earth*. Daniel is once called so, *Dan.* viii. 17. and but once; the compellation is used to no other of the prophets, but to Ezekiel all along. We may take it, 1. As an humble diminishing title, lest Ezekiel should be lifted up with the abundance of the revelations, he is put in mind of this, that still he is a *son of man*; a mean, weak, mortal creature. Among other things made known to him, it was necessary he should be made to know this, that he was a *son of man*, and therefore it was wonderful condescension in God that he was pleased thus to manifest himself to him. Now he is among the living creatures, the angels, yet he must remember that he is himself a man, a dying creature; *what is man, or the son of man*, that he should be thus visited, thus dignified? Though God had here a splendid retinue of holy angels about his throne, that were ready to go on his errands, yet he passeth them all by, and pitches upon Ezekiel, a *son of man*, to be his messenger to the *house of Israel*, for we *have this treasure in earthen vessels*, and God's messages sent us by men like ourselves, whose terror shall not *make us afraid*, nor *their hand be heavy upon us*. Ezekiel was a priest, but the priesthood was brought low, and the honour of it laid in the dust; it therefore became him, and all of his order, to humble themselves, and to lie low, as sons of men, common men. He was now to be employed as a prophet, God's embassador, and a ruler over the kingdoms, *Jer.* i. 10. a post of great honour, but he must remember that he is a *son of man*, and whatever good he did, it was not by any might of his own, for he was a *son of man*, but in the strength of divine grace, which must therefore have all the glory. Or, 2. We may take it as an honourable, dignifying title; for it is one of the titles of the Messiah in the Old Testament, *Dan.* vii. 13. *I saw one like the Son of man come with the clouds of heaven*, from whence Christ borrows the title he often calls himself by, *The Son of man*. The prophets were types of him, as they had near access to God, and great authority among men; and therefore as David the king is called the *Lord's anointed*, or *Christ*, so Ezekiel the prophet is called *son of man*.

1. Ezekiel is here ſet up, and made to ſtand, that he might receive his commiſſion, *ver.* 1, 2. He is ſet up,

(1.) By a divine command: *Son of man, ſtand upon thy feet.* His lying proſtrate was a poſture of greater reverence, but his ſtanding up would be a poſture of greater readineſs and fitneſs for buſineſs. Our adorings of God muſt not hinder, but rather quicken and excite our actings for God. He *fell on his face* in a holy fear and awe of God, but he was quickly raiſed up again; for they that *humble themſelves ſhall be exalted*; God delights not in the dejections of his ſervants, but the ſame that brings them low will raiſe them up; the ſame that is a ſpirit of bondage will be a ſpirit of adoption. *Stand, and I will ſpeak to thee,* Note, We may then expect that God will ſpeak to us, when we ſtand ready to do what he commands us.

(2.) By a divine power going along with that command, *ver.* 2. God bid him *ſtand up,* but becauſe he had not ſtrength of his own to recover his feet, nor courage to face the viſion, *the ſpirit entred into him,* and *ſet him upon his feet.* Note, God is graciouſly pleaſed to work that in us which he requires of us, and raiſeth thoſe whom he bids riſe. We muſt ſtir up ourſelves, and then God will put ſtrength into us; muſt *work out our ſalvation,* and then God will *work in us.* He obſerved that the Spirit entered into him then when Chriſt ſpake to him; for Chriſt conveys his Spirit by his word, as the ordinary means, and makes the word effectual by the Spirit. *The Spirit ſet* the prophet *upon his feet,* to raiſe him up from his dejections, for *he is the Comforter.* Thus, in the like caſe Daniel was ſtrengthened by a divine touch, *Dan.* x. 18. and John was raiſed by the right hand of Chriſt laid upon him, *Rev.* i. 17. the *Spirit ſet him upon his feet,* made him willing and forward to do as he was bidden, and then he *heard him that ſpake* to him. He heard the voice before. *chap.* i. 28. but now he heard it more diſtinctly and clearly, heard it and ſubmitted to it. The *Spirit ſets us upon our feet,* by inclining our will to our duty, and thereby diſpoſeth the underſtanding to receive the knowledge of it.

2. Ezekiel is here ſent, and made to go with a meſſage to the children of Iſrael, *ver.* 3. *I ſend thee to the children of Iſrael.* God had for many ages been ſending to them his ſervants the prophets, riſing up betimes and ſending them, but to little purpoſe, they were now ſent into captivity for abuſing God's meſſengers; and yet even there God ſends this prophet among them, to try if their ears were open to diſcipline, now they were holden in the cords of affliction. As the ſupports of life, ſo the means of grace are continued to us after they have been a thouſand times forfeited. Now obſerve,

1. The rebellion of the people to whom this embaſſador is ſent; and he is ſent to reduce them to their allegiance, to bring back the children of Iſrael to the Lord their God; let the prophet know that there is occaſion for his going on this errand, for they are a *rebellious nation,* ver. 3. *a rebellious houſe,* ver. 5. They are called *children of Iſrael,* they retain the name of their pious anceſtors, but they are wretchedly degenerated, they are become *Goim,* nations, the word commonly uſed for the Gentiles; the *children of Iſrael* are become as the *children of the Æthiopian,* Amos ix. 7. for they are *rebellious*; and rebels at home are much more provoking to a prince than enemies abroad. Their idolatries and falſe worſhips were the ſins which, more than any other, denominated them a *rebellious nation,* for thereby they ſet up another prince in oppoſition to their rightful ſovereign, and did homage, and paid tribute to the uſurper, which is the higheſt degree of rebellion that can be.

(1.) They had been all along a rebellious generation, and had perſiſted in their rebellion, *they and their fathers have tranſgreſſed againſt me.* Note, Thoſe are not always in the right, that have antiquity and the fathers on their ſide; for there are errors and corruptions of long ſtanding: and it is ſo far from being an excuſe for walking in an ill way, that our fathers walked in it, that it is really an aggravation, for it is juſtifying the ſin of thoſe that have gone before us. They have continued in their rebellion, *even unto this very day*; notwithſtanding the various means and methods that have been made uſe of to reclaim them; *to this day,* when they are under divine rebukes for their rebellion, yet they continue *rebellious*; many among them, like Ahaz, even *in their diſtreſs, treſpaſs yet more*; they are not the better for all the changes that have been concerning them, but ſtill remain unchanged.

(2.) They were now hardened in their rebellion. They are *impudent children,* brazen-faced, and cannot bluſh; they are ſtiff-hearted, ſelf-willed, and cannot bend, cannot ſtoop; neither aſhamed nor afraid to ſin; that will not be wrought upon by the ſenſe either of honour or duty. We are willing to hope this was not the character of all, but of many, and thoſe, perhaps, the leading men. Obſerve, (1.) God knew this concerning them, how inflexible, how incorrigible they were. Note, God is perfectly acquainted with every man's true character, whatever his pretenſions and profeſſions may be. (2.) He told the prophet this, that he might know the better how to deal with them, and what handle to take them by. He muſt rebuke ſuch men as thoſe ſharply, cuttingly; muſt deal plainly with them, though they call it dealing roughly. God tells him this, that it might be no ſurprize or ſtumbling-block to him, if he found that his preaching ſhould not make that impreſſion upon them which he had reaſon to think it would.

2. The dominion of the prince by whom this embaſſador is ſent. (1.) He has authority to command him whom he ſends, *I do ſend thee unto them,* and therefore *thou ſhalt ſay* thus and thus unto them, *ver.* 4. Note, It is the prerogative of Chriſt to ſend prophets and miniſters, and to enjoin them their work. St. Paul thanked Chriſt Jeſus who put him into the miniſtry, 1 *Tim.* i. 12. for as he was ſent of the Father, miniſters are ſent by him; and as he received the Spirit without meaſure, he gives the Spirit by meaſure, ſaying, *Receive ye the holy Ghoſt.* They are *impudent* and *rebellious,* and yet *I ſend thee unto them.* Note, Chriſt gives the means of grace to many that he knows will not make a good uſe of thoſe means; puts many a price into the hand of fools that have not only no heart to it, but have their hearts turned againſt it. Thus he will magnify his own grace, juſtify his own judgment, leave them inexcuſable, and make their condemnation more intolerable. (2.) He has authority by him to command thoſe to whom he ſends him: *Thou ſhalt ſay unto them, Thus ſaith the Lord God.* All he ſaid to them muſt be ſpoken in God's name, enforced by his authority, and delivered as from him. Chriſt delivered his doctrines as a Son, *Verily, verily I ſay unto you*; the prophets as ſervants, *Thus ſaith the Lord God,* our Maſter and yours. Note, The writings of the prophets are the word of God, and ſo are to be regarded by every one of us. (3.) He has authority to call thoſe to an account to whom he ſends his embaſſadors. *Whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear,* whether they will attend to the word, or turn their backs upon it, *they ſhall know that there hath been a prophet among them,* ſhall know by experience. 1. If they hear and obey they will know by comfortable experience, that the word which did them good was brought them by one that had a commiſſion from God, and a divine power going along with him in the execution of it. Thus they who were converted by St. Paul's preaching are ſaid to be *the ſeals of his apoſtleſhip,* 1 Cor. ix. 2. When mens hearts are ſaid to burn under the word, and their wills to bow to it, then they know and hear the witneſs in themſelves, that it is not the *word of men, but of God.* 2. If they forbear, if they turn a deaf ear to the word, as it is to be feared they will, *for they are a rebellious houſe,* yet they ſhall be made to know, that he whom they ſlighted was indeed a prophet, by the reproaches of their own conſciences, and the juſt judgments of God upon them for refuſing him; they ſhall know it to their coſt, know it to their confuſion, know it by ſad experience, what a pernicious dangerous thing it is to deſpiſe God's meſſengers. They ſhall know by the accompliſhment of the threatnings, that the prophet who denounced them was ſent of God; thus the word will *take hold of men,* Zech. i. 6. Note, (1.) Thoſe to whom the word of God is ſent are upon their trial, *whether they will hear,* or *whether they will forbear,* and accordingly will their doom be. (2.) Whether we be edified by the word or no, it is certain God will be glorified, and his word magnified and made honourable. Whether it be a *ſavour of life unto life,* or *of death unto death,* either way it will appear to be of divine original.

6. ¶ And thou, ſon of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns *be* with thee, and thou doſt dwell among ſcorpions: be not afraid of their words, nor be diſmayed at their looks, though they *be* a rebellious houſe. 7. And thou ſhalt ſpeak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, for they *are* moſt rebellious. 8. But thou, ſon of man, hear what I ſay unto thee; Be not thou rebellious like that rebellious houſe: open thy mouth, and eat that I give thee. 9. ¶ And when I looked, behold, an hand *was* ſent unto me, and lo, a roll of a book *was* therein. 10. And he ſpread it before me, and it *was* written within and without, and *there was* written therein, lamentations, and mourning, and wo.

The prophet having received his commiſſion, here receives a charge with it. It is a poſt of honour to which he is advanced, but withal it is a poſt of ſervice, and work, and it is here required of him,

1. That he be bold: He muſt act in the diſcharge of this truſt with an undaunted courage and reſolution, and not be either driven off from his work, or made to drive on heavily by the difficulties and oppoſitions that he would be likely to meet with in it: *Son of man, be not afraid of them,* ver. 6. Note, Thoſe that will do any thing to purpoſe in the ſervice of God, muſt not be afraid of the face of man; for the fear of men will bring a ſnare, which will be very entangling to us in the work of God. (1.) God tells the prophet what was the character of thoſe to whom he ſent him, as before, *ver.* 3, 4. They are *briers and thorns,* ſcratching, and tearing, and vexing a man which way ſoever he turns. They are continually teazing God's prophets, and entangling them in their *talk,* Matt. xxii. 15. they are *pricking briers* and *grieving thorns.* The beſt of them is as a brier, and *the moſt upright ſharper than a thorn-hedge,* Mic. vii. 4. Thorns and briers are the fruit of ſin, and the curſe, and of equal date with the enmity between the ſeed

of the woman and the ſeed of the ſerpent. Note, Wicked men, eſpecially the perſecutors of God's prophets and people, are as briers and thorns, which are hurtful to the ground, choke the good ſeed, hinder God's husbandry, are vexatious to his husbandmen, but they are *nigh unto curſing*, and *their end is to be burned*; yet God makes uſe of them ſometimes for the correction and inſtruction of his people, as *Gideon taught the men of Succoth with thorns and briers*, Judg. viii. 16. yet this is not the worſt of their character, they are *ſcorpions*, venomous and malignant; the ſting of a ſcorpion is a thouſand times more hurtful than the ſcratch of a brier; perſecutors are a *generation of vipers*, are of the ſerpent's ſeed, and the *poiſon of aſps is under their tongue*; and they are *more ſubtle than any beaſt of the field*. And which makes the prophet's caſe the more grievous, he dwells among theſe ſcorpions, they are continually about him, ſo that he cannot be ſafe or quiet in his own houſe; theſe ill men are his ill neighbours, who thereby have many opportunities, and will let ſlip none to do him a miſchief. God takes notice of this to the prophet, as Chriſt to the angel of one of the churches, *Rev.* ii. 13. *I know thy works, and where thou dwelleſt, even where Satan's ſeat is*. Ezekiel had been in viſion converſing with angels, but when he comes down from this mount he finds he *dwells with ſcorpions*. (2.) He tells him what would be their carriage towards him, that they would do what they could to frighten him with *their looks*, and *their words*; they would hector him and threaten him, would look ſcornfully and ſpitefully at him, and do their utmoſt to face him down, and put him out of countenance, that they might drive him off from being a prophet, or at leaſt from telling them of their faults, and threatning them with the judgments of God; or, if they could not prevail in this, that they might vex and perplex him, and diſturb the repoſe of his mind. They were now themſelves in ſubjection, diveſted of all power, ſo that they had no other way of perſecuting the prophet but with *their looks and their words*, and ſo they did perſecute him. *Behold, thou haſt ſpoken and done evel things as thou couldſt*, Jer. iii. 5. If they had had more power they would have done more miſchief. They were now in captivity ſmarting for their rebellion, and particularly their miſuſing God's prophets, and yet they are as bad as ever; *Though thou bray a fool in a mortar, yet will not his fooliſhneſs depart from him*; no providences will of themſelves humble and reform men, unleſs the grace of God work with them. But how malicious ſoever they were, Ezekiel muſt not be *afraid of them*, nor *diſmayed*, he muſt not be deterred from his work, or any part of it, nor be diſheartened or diſpirited in it by all their menaces, but go on in it with reſolution and chearfulneſs, aſſuring himſelf of ſafety under the divine protection.

2. It is required that he be faithful, *ver.* 7. (1.) He muſt be faithful to Chriſt who ſent him: *Thou ſhalt ſpeak my words unto them*. Note, As it is the honour of prophets that they are intruſted to ſpeak God's words, ſo it is their duty to cleave cloſe to them, and to ſpeak nothing but what is agreeable to the words of God; miniſters muſt always ſpeak according to that rule. (2.) He muſt be faithful to the ſouls of thoſe to whom he was ſent; *whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear*, he muſt deliver his meſſage to them as he received it. He muſt bring them to comply with the word, and not ſtudy to accomodate the word to their humours. It is true, they are *moſt rebellious*, they are rebellion it ſelf, but however *ſpeak my words* to them, whether they are pleaſing or unpleaſing. Note, The untractableneſs and unprofitableneſs of people under the word, is no good reaſon why miniſters ſhould leave off preaching to them; nor muſt we decline an opportunity by which good may be done, though we have a great deal of reaſon to think no good will be done.

3. It is required that he be obſervant of his inſtructions.

(1.) Here is a general intimation what the inſtructions were that were given him, in the contents of the book which was *ſpread before him, ver.* 10. 1. His inſtructions were large, for the roll was *written within and without*, on the inſide and the backſide of the roll; it was as a ſheet of paper written on all the four ſides. One ſide contained their ſins, the other ſide contained the judgments of God coming upon them for thoſe ſins. Note, God hath a great deal to ſay to his people when they are degenerated and become rebellious. 2. His inſtructions were melancholy, he was ſent on a ſad errand; the matter contained in the book was *lamentations, and mourning, and wo*. The idea of his meſſage is taken from the impreſſion it would make upon the minds of thoſe that carefully attended to it, it would ſet them a weeping, and crying out, wo and alas. Both the diſcoveries of ſin and the denunciations of wrath would be matter of lamentations. What could be more lamentable, more mournful, more woful, than to ſee a holy, happy people ſunk into ſuch a ſtate of ſin and miſery, as it appears by the prophecy of this book the Jews were at this time. Ezekiel echoes to Jeremiah's Lamentations. Note, Though God is rich in mercy, yet impenitent ſinners will find there are even among his words, *lamentations and wo*.

(2.) Here is an expreſs charge given the prophet to obſerve his inſtructions, both in receiving his meſſage and delivering it. He is now to receive it, and is here commanded,

1. To attend diligently to it, *Son of man, hear what I ſay unto thee*, ver. 8. Note, Thoſe that ſpeak from God to others, muſt be ſure to hear from God themſelves, and be obedient to his voice. *Be not thou rebellious*, i. e. do not refuſe to go on this errand, or to deliver it; do not fly off, as Jonah did, for fear of diſobliging thy countrymen. They are a *rebellious houſe*, among whom thou liveſt, but be not thou like them, do not comply with them in any thing that is evil. If miniſters, that are reprovers by office, connive at ſin, and indulge ſinners, either ſhew them not their wickedneſs, or ſhew them not the fatal conſequences of it, for fear of diſpleaſing them, and getting their ill-will, they hereby make themſelves partakers of their guilt, and are rebellious like them. If people will not do their duty in reforming, yet let miniſters do theirs in reproving, and they will have the comfort of it in the reflection, whatever the ſucceſs be, as that prophet had, *Iſa.* l. 5. *The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious*. Even the beſt men, when their lot is caſt in bad times and places, have need to be cautioned againſt the worſt crimes.

2. To digeſt it in his own mind by an experience of the ſavour and power of it. Do not only *hear what I ſay unto thee*, but *open thy mouth, and eat that I give thee*: Prepare to eat it, and eat it willingly, and with an appetite. All God's children are content to be at their heavenly Father's finding, and to eat whatever he gives them. That which God's hand reached out to Ezekiel was *a roll of a book*, or, *the volume of a book*; a book, or ſcroll of paper, or parchment full written, and rolled up. Divine revelation comes to us from the hand of Chriſt, he gave it the prophets, *Rev.* i. 1. when we look at *the roll of the book*, we muſt have an eye to the hand by which it is ſent to us. He that brought it to the prophet *ſpread it before him*, that he might not ſwallow it with an implicit faith, but might fully underſtand the contents of it, and then receive it, and make it his own. *Be not rebellious*, ſaith Chriſt, but *eat what I give thee*. If we receive not what Chriſt in his ordinances and providences allots for us, if we ſubmit not to his word and rod, and reconcile not our ſelves to both, we ſhall be accounted rebellious.

CHAP. III.

In this chapter we have the further preparation of the prophet for the work to which God called him. 1. *His eating of the roll that was preſented to him in the cloſe of the foregoing chapter*, ver. 1,—3. 2. *Farther inſtructions and encouragements given him to the ſame purpoſe with thoſe in the foregoing chapter*, ver. 4,—11. 3. *The mighty impulſe he was under, with which he was carried to thoſe that were to be his hearers*, ver. 12,—15. 4. *A farther explication of his office and buſineſs as a prophet, under the ſimilitude of a watchman*, ver. 16,—21. 5. *The reſtraining and reſtoring of the prophet's liberty of ſpeech, as God pleaſed*, ver. 22,—27.

1. MOreover he ſaid unto me, Son of man, eat that thou findeſt; eat this roll, and go ſpeak unto the houſe of Iſrael. 2. So I opened my mouth, and he cauſed me to eat that roll. 3. And he ſaid unto me, Son of man, cauſe thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then did I eat *it*, and it was in my mouth as honey for ſweetneſs. 4. ¶ And he ſaid unto me, Son of man, go, get thee unto the houſe of Iſrael, and ſpeak with my words unto them. 5. For thou *art* not ſent to a people of a ſtrange ſpeech, and of an hard language, *but* to the houſe of Iſrael: 6. Not to many people of a ſtrange ſpeech, and of an hard language, whoſe words thou canſt not underſtand: ſurely, had I ſent thee to them, they would have hearkned unto thee. 7. But the houſe of Iſrael will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me: for all the houſe of Iſrael *are* impudent and hard-hearted. 8. Behold, I have made thy face ſtrong againſt their faces, and thy forehead ſtrong againſt their foreheads. 9. As an adamant harder than flint have I made thy forehead: fear them not, neither be diſmayed at their looks, though they *be* a rebellious houſe. 10. Moreover, he ſaid unto me, Son of man, all my words that I ſhall ſpeak unto thee, receive in thine heart, and hear with thine ears. 11. And go, get thee to them of the captivity, unto the children of thy people, and ſpeak unto them, and tell them, Thus ſaith the LORD God, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear. 12. Then the ſpirit took me up, and I heard behind me a voice of a great ruſhing, *ſaying*, Bleſſed *be* the glory of the LORD from his place. 13. *I heard* alſo the noiſe of the wings of the living creatures that touched one another, and the noiſe of the wheels over againſt them, and a noiſe of a great ruſhing. 14. So the ſpirit lifted me up, and took me away, and I went in bitterneſs, in the heat of my ſpirit, but the hand of the LORD was ſtrong upon me. 15. ¶ Then I came to them

them of the captivity at Tel-abib, that dwelt by the river of Chebar, and I ſat where they ſat, and remained there aſtoniſhed among them ſeven days.

Theſe verſes are fitly joined by ſome tranſlators to the foregoing chapter, as being of a piece with it, and a continuation of the ſame viſion. The prophets received the word from God, that they might deliver them to the people of God; furniſhed themſelves, that they might furniſh them with the knowledge of the mind and will of God. Now here the prophet is taught,

(1.) How he muſt receive divine revelation himſelf, *ver.* 1. Chriſt (whom he ſaw *upon the throne*, chap. i. 26.) ſaid to him, *Son of man, eat this roll*; admit this revelation into thine underſtanding, take it, take the meaning of it, underſtand it aright, admit it into thy heart, apply it, and be affected with it; imprint it in thy mind, ruminate and chew the cud upon it; take it as it is intire, and make no difficulty of it; nay, take a pleaſure in it, as thou doſt in thy meat, and let thy ſoul be nouriſhed and ſtrengthned by it; let it be meat and drink to thee, and as thy neceſſary food; be full of it, as thou art of the meat thou haſt eaten. Thus miniſters ſhould, in their ſtudies and meditations, take in that word of God which they are to preach to others. *Thy words were found, and I did eat them*, Jer. xv. 16. They muſt be both well acquainted and much affected with the things of God, that they may ſpeak of them both clearly and warmly, with a great deal of divine light and heat. Now obſerve,

1. How this command is inculcated upon the prophet. In the chapter before, *Eat what I give thee*; and here, *ver.* 1. *Eat that thou findeſt*, i. e. that which is preſented to thee by the hand of Chriſt. Note, Whatever we find to be the word of God, whatever is brought to us by him who is the Word of God, we muſt receive it without diſputing. What we find ſet before us in the ſcripture that we muſt eat. And again, *ver.* 3. *Cauſe thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll*; do not eat it and bring it up again, as that which is nauſeous, but eat it and retain it, as that which is nouriſhing, and grateful to the ſtomach. Feaſt upon this viſion till thou be *full of matter*, as Elihu was, Job xxxii. 18. Let the word have a place in thee, the innermoſt place; we muſt take pains with our own hearts, that we may cauſe them duly to receive and entertain the word of God, that every faculty may do its office, in order to the due digeſting of the word of God; that it may be turned *in ſuccum & ſanguinem*, into blood and ſpirits. We muſt empty our ſelves of worldly things, that we may *fill our bowels with this roll.*

2. How this command is explained, *ver.* 10. *All my words that I ſhall ſpeak unto thee*, to be ſpoken unto the people, *thou muſt receive in thine heart*, as well as *hear with thine ears*, receive them in the love of them. *Let theſe ſayings ſink down into your ears*, Luk. ix. 44. Chriſt demands the prophet's attention, not only to what he now ſaith, but to all that he ſhall at any time hereafter ſpeak; *receive* it all *in thine heart, meditate on theſe things, and give thy ſelf wholly to them*, 1 Tim. iv. 15.

3. How this command was obeyed in viſion: He *opened his mouth*, and Chriſt *cauſed him to eat the roll*, ver. 2. If we be truly willing to receive the word into our hearts, Chriſt will, by his Spirit, bring it into them, and cauſe it to *dwell in us richly.* If he that *opens the roll*, and by his Spirit, as a *ſpirit of revelation*, ſpreads it before us, did not alſo *open our underſtandings*, and by his Spirit, as a *ſpirit of wiſdom*, give us the knowledge of it, and *cauſe us to eat* it, we ſhould be for ever ſtrangers to it. The prophet had reaſon to fear that the roll would be an unpleaſant morſel, and a ſorry diſh to make a meal of, but it proved *it was in* his *mouth as honey for ſweetneſs.* Note, If we readily obey even the moſt difficult commands, we ſhall find that comfort in the reflection which will make us abundant amends for all the hardſhips we met with in the way of our duty. Though *the roll was filled with lamentations, and mourning, and woe*, yet it was to the prophet *as honey for ſweetneſs.* Note, Gracious ſouls can receive thoſe truths of God with great delight, which ſpeak moſt terror to wicked people. We find St. John let into ſome part of the revelation by ſuch a ſign as this, *Rev.* x. 9, 10. He *took the book out of the angel's hand, and eat it up, and it was*, as this here, *in* his *mouth ſweet as honey*; but it was *bitter in the belly*; and we ſhall find that this here was ſo too, for, *ver.* 14. the prophet *went in bitterneſs.*

(2.) How he muſt deliver that divine revelation to others, which he himſelf had received, *ver.* 1. *Eat this roll, and* then *go, ſpeak to the houſe of Iſrael.* 1. He muſt not undertake to preach the things of God to others, till he did himſelf fully underſtand them; let him not go without his errand, or take it by the halves. 2. When he doth himſelf fully underſtand them, he muſt be both buſy and bold to preach them for the good of others. We muſt not *conceal the words of the holy One*, Job vi. 10. for that is burying a talent which was given us to trade with. He muſt *go, and ſpeak to the houſe of Iſrael*, for it is their privilege to have God's ſtatutes and judgments made known to them; as *the giving of the law*, the lively oracles, ſo prophecy, the living oracle, *pertains to them.* He is not ſent to the Chaldeans to reprove them for their ſins, but *to the houſe of Iſrael* to reprove them for theirs; for the father corrects his own child if he do amiſs, not the child of a ſtranger.

The inſtructions given him in ſpeaking to them are much the ſame with thoſe in the foregoing chapter.

1. He muſt ſpeak to them all that, and that only, which God ſpake to him. He had ſaid before, *chap.* ii. 7. *Thou ſhalt ſpeak my words to them*; here he ſaith, *ver.* 4. *Thou ſhalt ſpeak with my words unto them*; or, *in my words*; he muſt not only ſay that which for ſubſtance is the ſame that God had ſaid to him, but, as near as may be, in the ſame language and expreſſions. Bleſſed Paul, though a man of a very happy invention, yet ſpeaks of the things of God *in the words which the holy Ghoſt teacheth*, 1 Cor. ii. 13. Scripture truths look beſt in ſcripture language, their native dreſs; and how can we better ſpeak God's mind than with his words?

2. He muſt remember that they are *the houſe of Iſrael*, whom he is ſent to ſpeak to; God's houſe, and his own; and therefore ſuch as he ought to have a particular concern for, and to deal faithfully and tenderly with: They were ſuch as he had an intimate acquaintance with, being not only their countryman, but their *companion in tribulation*; they and he were fellow-ſufferers, and had lately been fellow-travellers, in very melancholy circumſtances, from Judea to Babylon, and had often mingled their tears, which could not but knit their affections to each other. It was well for the people that they had a prophet who knew experimentally how to ſympathize with them, and could not but be touched with the feeling of their infirmities: It was well for the prophet that he had to do with thoſe of his own nation, not *with a people of ſtrange ſpeech, and a hard language*; deep of lip, ſo that thou canſt not fathom their meaning, and heavy of tongue, whom it is intolerable and impoſſible to converſe with: Every ſtrange language ſeems to us to be deep and heavy. Thou art not ſent to *many ſuch people*, whom thou couldſt neither ſpeak to, nor hear from, neither underſtand, nor be underſtood among, but by an interpreter: The apoſtles indeed were ſent to *many people of a ſtrange ſpeech*, but they could not have done any good among them, if they had not had *the gift of tongues*: But Ezekiel was ſent only to one people, thoſe but a few, and his own, whom having acquaintance with, he might hope to find acceptance with.

3. He muſt remember what God had already told him of the ill character of thoſe to whom he was ſent, that if he met with diſcouragement and diſappointment in them, he might not be offended. They *are impudent and hard-hearted*, ver. 7. no convictions of ſin would make them bluſh, no denunciations of wrath would make them tremble. Two things aggravated their obſtinacy: 1. That they were more obſtinate than their neighbours would have been, if the prophet had been ſent to them. Had God ſent him to any other people, though of a *ſtrange ſpeech, ſurely they would have hearkened to* him, they would, at leaſt, have given him a patient hearing, and ſhewed him that reſpect which he could not obtain of his own countrymen. The Ninevites were wrought upon by Jonah's preaching, when the houſe of Iſrael, that was compaſſed about with ſo great a cloud of prophets, was unhumbled and unreformed. But what ſhall we ſay to theſe things? The means of grace are given to thoſe that will not improve them, and withheld from thoſe that would have improved them: We muſt reſolve this into the divine ſovereignty, and ſay, Lord, *thy judgments are a great deep.* 2. That they were obſtinate againſt God himſelf; they *will not hearken unto thee*, and no marvel, *for they will not hearken unto me*; they will not regard the word of the prophet, for they will not regard the rod of God, by which the *Lord's voice cries in the city.* If they believe not God ſpeaking to them by a miniſter, neither would they believe though he ſhould ſpeak to them by *a voice from heaven*: Nay, therefore they reject what the prophet ſaith, becauſe it comes from God, whom *the carnal mind is enmity* to: They are prejudiced againſt the law of God, and for that reaſon turn a deaf ear to his prophets, whoſe buſineſs it is to enforce his law.

4. He muſt reſolve to put on courage, and Chriſt promiſeth to ſteel him with it, *ver.* 8, 9. He is ſent to ſuch as *are impudent and hard-hearted*, that will receive no impreſſions, nor be wrought upon either by fair means or foul, that will take a pride in affronting God's meſſenger, and confronting the meſſage: It will be a hard task to know how to deal with them: But, 1. God will enable him to put a good face on it; *I have made thy face ſtrong againſt their faces*, i. e. endued thee with all the firmneſs and boldneſs that the caſe calls for. Perhaps, Ezekiel was naturally baſhful and timorous, but if God did not find him fit, yet, by his grace, he made him fit, to encounter the greateſt difficulties. Note, The more impudent wicked people are in their oppoſition to religion, the more openly and reſolutely ſhould God's people appear in the practice and defence of it: Let the *innocent ſtir up himſelf againſt the hypocrite*, Job xvii. 8. When vice is daring, let not virtue be ſneaking: And when God has work to do, he will ſpirit men for it, and give them ſtrength according to the day: If there be occaſion, God can and will, by his grace, make the *foreheads* of faithful miniſters *as an adamant*, ſo that the moſt threatning powers ſhall not daſh them out of countenance. *The Lord God will help me, therefore have I ſet my face like a flint*, Iſa. l. 7. 2. He is therefore commanded to have a good heart on it, and to go on in his work with a holy ſecurity, not valuing either the cenſures or the threats of his enemies. *Fear not, neither be diſmayed at*

their

their looks; let not the menaces of their impotent malice caſt either a damp upon thee, or a ſtumbling-block before thee. Bold ſinners muſt have bold reprovers; *evil beaſts* muſt be *rebuked* cuttingly, *Tit.* i. 12, 13. muſt be *ſaved with fear*, Jude 23. Thoſe that keep cloſe to the ſervice of God, may be ſure of the favour of God, and then they need not be diſmayed at the proud looks of men. Let not the angry countenance, that drives away a backbiting tongue, give any check to a reproving tongue.

5. He muſt continue inſtant with them in his preaching, whatever the ſucceſs was, *ver.* 11. He muſt *go to them of the captivity*, who, being in affliction, it was to be hoped would receive inſtruction, muſt look upon them as *the children of his people*, to whom he was nearly allied, and for whom he therefore ought to have a very tender concern, as Paul for his kinſmen, *Rom.* ix. 3. And he muſt *tell them* not only what the Lord ſaid, but that the Lord ſaid it; let him ſpeak in God's name, and back what he ſaid with his authority, *Thus ſaith the Lord God*; *tell them* ſo, *whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear*. Not that it may be indifferent to us what ſucceſs our miniſtry has, but, whatever it be, we muſt go on with our work, and leave the iſſue to God. We muſt not ſay, here are ſome ſo good that we do not need to ſpeak to them; or, here are others ſo bad that it is to no purpoſe to ſpeak to them; but, however it be, deliver thy meſſage faithfully, *tell them, the Lord God ſaith* ſo and ſo, let them reject it at their peril.

Full inſtructions being thus given to the prophet, purſuant to his commiſſion, we are here told,

(1.) With what ſatisfaction this miſſion of his was applauded by the holy angels, who were very well pleaſed to ſee one, of a nature inferior to their own, thus honourably employed and intruſted. He *heard a voice of a great ruſhing*, ver. 12. as if the angels thronged and crowded to ſee the inauguration of a prophet; for to them *is known by the church*, that is, by reflection from the church, *the manifold wiſdom of God*, Eph. iii. 10. They ſeemed to ſtrive who ſhould get neareſt to this great ſight. He *heard the noiſe of their wings that touched*, or, as the word is, *kiſſed one another*; noting the mutual affections and aſſiſtances of the angels. He heard alſo *the noiſe of the wheels* of providence, moving *over againſt* the angels, and in conſort with them: All this was to engage his attention, and to convince him, that the God that ſent him, having ſuch a glorious train of attendants, no doubt, had power ſufficient to bear him out in his work. But all this noiſe ended in the voice of praiſe, he heard them ſaying, *Bleſſed be the glory of the Lord from his place*, i. e. 1. *From* heaven, *his place* above, whence his glory was now in viſion deſcending, or whither, perhaps, it was now returning. Let the innumerable company of angels above join with thoſe employed in this viſion, in ſaying, *Bleſſed be the glory of the Lord. Praiſe ye the Lord from the heavens. Praiſe him all his angels*, Pſalm cxlviii. 1, 2. 2. *From* the temple, *his place* on earth, whence his glory was now departing: They lament the departure of the glory, but adore the righteouſneſs of God in it: However it be, yet God is bleſſed and glorious, and ever will be ſo. The prophet Iſaiah heard God thus praiſed, when he received his commiſſion, *Iſa.* vi. 4. and a comfort it is to all the faithful ſervants of God, when they ſee how much God is diſhonoured in this lower world, to think how much he is admired and glorified in the upper world. *The glory of the Lord* hath many ſlights from our place, but many *praiſes from his place*.

(2.) With what reluctancy of his own ſpirit, and yet with what a mighty efficacy of *the Spirit of God*, the prophet was himſelf brought to the execution of his office. *The grace given to him was not in vain*; for,

1. The ſpirit led him with a ſtrong hand. God bid him go, but he ſtirred not till *the ſpirit took him up*. *The ſpirit of the living creatures* that was *in the wheels*, now was in the prophet too, and *took him up*; firſt to hear more diſtinctly the acclamations of the angels, *ver.* 12. but afterwards, *ver.* 14. *lifted him up, and took him away* to his work, which he was backward to, being very loth either to bring trouble upon himſelf, or foretel it to his people: He would gladly have been excuſed, but muſt own, as another prophet doth, *Jer.* xx. 7. *Thou waſt ſtronger than I, and haſt prevailed*. Ezekiel would willingly have kept all he heard and ſaw to himſelf, that it might go no further, *but the hand of the Lord was ſtrong upon him*, and overpowered him; he was carried on, contrary to his own inclinations, by the prophetical impulſe, ſo that he could not *but ſpeak the things which he had heard and ſeen*, as the apoſtles, *Acts* iv. 20. Note, Thoſe whom God calls to the miniſtry, as he furniſheth their heads for it, ſo he bows their hearts to it.

2. He followed with a ſad heart. *The Spirit took me away*, ſaith he, *and* then *I went*, but it was *in bitterneſs, in the heat of my ſpirit*. He had, perhaps, ſeen what a hard task Jeremiah had at Jeruſalem, when he appeared as a prophet, what pains he took, what oppoſition he met with, how he was abuſed by hand and tongue, and what ill treatment he met with, and all to no purpoſe; and muſt I be ſet up for a mark like him, thinks Ezekiel? The life of a captive was bad enough; but what would the life of a prophet in captivity be? therefore he went in this fret, and under this diſcompoſure. Note, There may, in ſome caſes, be a great reluctancy of corruption, even there where there is a manifeſt predominancy of grace. *I went*, not *diſobedient to the heavenly viſion*, or out-running the work, as Jonah, but *I went in bitterneſs*, not at all pleaſed with it. When he received the divine revelation himſelf, it was to him *ſweet as honey*, ver. 3. he could, with abundance of pleaſure, have ſpent all his days in meditating upon it; but when he is to preach it to others, who, he foreſees, will be hardned and exaſperated by it, and have their condemnation aggravated, then he goes *in bitterneſs*. Note, It is a great grief to faithful miniſters, and makes them go on in their work with a heavy heart, when they find people untractable, and hating to be reformed. He *went in the heat of his ſpirit*, becauſe of the diſcouragements he foreſaw he ſhould meet with, *but the hand of the Lord was ſtrong upon* him, not only to compel him to his work, but to fit him for it, and carry him through it, and animate him againſt the difficulties he would meet with, (ſo we may underſtand it) and when he found it ſo, he was better reconciled to his buſineſs, and applied himſelf to it: *Then he came to them of the captivity*, ver. 15. to ſome place where there were many of them together, *and ſat where they ſat*, either working, or reading, or talking, and continued *among them ſeven days*, to hear what they ſaid, and obſerve what they did; and all that time he was waiting for *the word of the Lord* to come to him. Note, Thoſe that would ſpeak ſuitably and profitably to people about their ſouls, muſt acquaint themſelves with them, and with their caſe; muſt do as Ezekiel did here, muſt *ſit where they ſit*, and ſpeak familiarly to them of the things of God, and put themſelves into their condition, yea, though they *ſit by the rivers of Babylon*. But obſerve, he was *there aſtoniſhed*, overwhelmed with grief for the ſins and miſeries of his people, and overpowered by the pomp of the viſion he had ſeen; he was *there deſolate*, ſo ſome read it; God ſhewed him no viſions, men made him no viſits; thus was he left to digeſt his grief, and come to a better temper, before *the word of the Lord* ſhould come to him. Note, Thoſe whom God deſigns to exalt and enlarge, he firſt humbles and ſtraitens for a time.

16. And it came to paſs at the end of ſeven days, that the word of the LORD came unto me, ſaying, 17. Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the houſe of Iſrael: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. 18. When I ſay unto the wicked, Thou ſhalt ſurely die, and thou giveſt him not warning, nor ſpeakeſt to warn the wicked from his wicked way to ſave his life: the ſame wicked *man* ſhall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. 19. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedneſs, nor from his wicked way, he ſhall die in his iniquity; but thou haſt delivered thy ſoul. 20. Again, when a righteous *man* doth turn from his righteouſneſs, and commit iniquity, and I lay a ſtumbling-block before him, he ſhall die: becauſe thou haſt not given him warning, he ſhall die in his ſin, and his righteouſneſs which he hath done ſhall not be remembred; but his blood will I require at thine hand. 21. Nevertheleſs, if thou warn the righteous *man*, that the righteous ſin not, and he doth not ſin; he ſhall ſurely live, becauſe he is warned: alſo thou haſt delivered thy ſoul.

Theſe further inſtructions God gave to the prophet *at the end of ſeven days*, i. e. on the ſeventh day after the viſion he had; and it is very probable, that both that and this were on the ſabbath day, which *the houſe of Iſrael*, even in their captivity, obſerved as well as they could in thoſe circumſtances; we do not find that their conquerors and oppreſſors tied them to any conſtant ſervice, as their Egyptian task-maſters had formerly done, but that they might obſerve the ſabbath reſt, for a ſign to diſtinguiſh between them and their neighbours; but for the ſabbath work, they had not the convenience of temple or ſynagogue, only it ſhould ſeem they had a *place by the river-ſide, where prayer was wont to be made*, as, *Acts* xvi. 13. there they met on the ſabbath day, there their enemies upbraided them with *the ſongs of Zion*, Pſalm cxxxvii. 1, 3. there Ezekiel met them, and *the word of the Lord* then and there *came to* him. He that had been muſing and meditating on the things of God all the week, was fit to ſpeak to the people in God's name on the ſabbath day, and diſpoſed to hear God ſpeak to him.

This ſabbath day Ezekiel was not ſo honoured with viſions of the glory of God, as he had been the ſabbath before; but is plainly, and by a very vulgar ſimilitude, told his duty, which he is to communicate to the people. Note, Raptures and tranſports of joy are not the daily bread of God's children, however they may, upon ſpecial occaſions, be feaſted with them. We muſt not deny, but that we have truly communion with God, (1 *John* i. 3.) though we have it not always ſo ſenſibly as at ſome times. And though the myſteries of the kingdom of heaven may ſome times be looked into, yet ordinarily it is plain preaching that is moſt for edification.

God here tells the prophet what his office was, and what the duty of that office; and this (we may ſuppoſe) he was to tell the people,

people, that they might attend to what he said, and improve it accordingly. Note, It is good for people to know and consider what a charge their ministers have of them, and what an account they must shortly give of that charge. Observe,

(1.) What the office is to which the prophet is called, *Son of man, I have made thee a watchman to the house of Israel*, ver. 17. The vision he saw astonished him, he knew not what to make of that, and therefore God used this plain comparison, which served better to lead him into the understanding of his work, and so to reconcile him to it. He sat among the captives, and said little, but God comes to him, and tells him that will not do, he is *a watchman*, and hath something to say to them; he is appointed to be as *a watchman* in the city, to guard against fire, robbers, and disturbers of the peace; as *a watchman* over the flock, to guard against thieves and beasts of prey; but especially as *a watchman* in the camp, in an invaded country, or a besieged town, that is to watch the motions of the enemy, and to sound an alarm upon the approach, nay, upon the first appearance of danger. This supposeth *the house of Israel* to be in a military state, and exposed to enemies, who are subtle and restless in their attempts upon it; yea, and each of the particular members of that house to be in danger, and concerned to stand upon their guard. Note, Ministers are *watchmen on the church's walls*, Isa. lxii. 6. *watchmen that go about the city*, Cant. iii. 3. It is a toilsome office; watchmen must keep awake be they never so sleepy, and keep abroad be it never so cold; they must stand all weathers *upon the watch-tower*, Isa. xxi. 8. Gen. xxxi. 40. It is a dangerous office; sometimes they cannot keep their post, but in peril of death from the enemy, who gain their point if they kill the centinel; and yet they dare not quit their post, upon pain of death from their general; such a dilemma are the church's watchmen in! men will curse them if they be faithful, and God will curse them if they be false. But it is a needful office; *the house of Israel* cannot be safe without watchmen, and yet, *except the Lord keep* it, *the watchman waketh but in vain*, Psalm cxxvii. 1, 2.

(2.) What is the duty of this office. The work of a watchman is to take notice, and to give notice.

1. The prophet, as *a watchman*, must take notice of what God said concerning this people, not only concerning the body of the people, which the prophecies of Jeremiah, and other prophets, had most commonly reference to, but concerning particular persons, according as their character was; he must not, as other watchmen, look round to spy danger, and gain intelligence, but he must look up to God, and further he need not look; *hear the word at my mouth*, ver. 17. Note, Those that are to preach, must first hear; for how can they teach others, who have not first learned themselves.

2. He must give notice of what he heard; as *a watchman* must have eyes in his head, so he must have a tongue in his head; if he be dumb, it is as bad as if he were blind, *Isa.* lvi. 10. Thou shalt *give them warning from me*, sound an alarm in the *holy mountain*; not in his own name, or as from himself, but in God's name, and from him. Ministers are God's mouth to the children of men. The scriptures are written for our admonition, *by them is thy servant warned*, Psalm xix. 11. But because that which is delivered *viva voce* commonly makes the deepest impression, God is pleased, by men like our selves, who are equally concerned, to enforce upon us the warnings of the written word.

Now the prophet, in his preaching, must distinguish between the wicked and the righteous, the precious and the vile, and in his applications must suit his alarms to each, giving every one his portion, which, if he did, he should have the comfort of it, whatever the success was, but, if not, he was accountable.

(1.) Some of those he had to do with were *wicked*, and he must *warn* them not to go on in their *wickedness*, but to *turn from* it, *ver.* 18, 19. We may observe here,

1. That the God of heaven hath said, and doth *say to* every *wicked* man, that if he go on still in his trespasses he *shall surely die*; *his iniquity* shall undoubtedly be his ruin, it tends to ruin, and will end in ruin: Dying *thou shalt die*, *thou shalt die* so great a death, *shalt die* eternally; be ever dying, but never dead. *The wicked man shall die in his iniquity*, *shall die* under the guilt of it, *die* under the dominion of it.

2. That if a *wicked man turn from his wickedness*, and *from his wicked way*, *he shall live*, and the ruin he is threatned with shall be prevented; and that he may do so, he is warned of the danger he is in. *The wicked man shall die* if he go on, but *shall live* if he repent. Observe, he is to turn *from his wickedness*, and *from his wicked way*. It is not enough for a man to turn *from his wicked way*, by an outward reformation, which may be the effect of his sins leaving of him, rather than of his leaving his sins, but he must turn *from his wickedness*, from the love of it, and the inclination to it, by an inward regeneration; if he do not so much as turn *from his wicked way*, there is little hopes that he will turn *from his wickedness*.

3. That it is the duty of ministers both to warn sinners of the danger of sin, and to assure them of the benefit of repentance; to set before them how miserable they are if they go on in sin, and how happy they may be if they will but repent and reform. Note, The ministry of the word is concerning matters of *life and death*, for those are the things it sets before us; *the blessing and the curse*; that we may escape the curse, and inherit the blessing.

4. That though ministers do not warn wicked people as they ought, of their misery and danger, yet that shall not be admitted as an excuse for those that go on still in their trespasses; for though the watchman did not *give them warning*, yet they *shall die in their iniquity*; for they had sufficient warning given them by the providence of God, and their own consciences, which, if they would have taken, they might have *saved* their *lives*.

5. That if ministers be not faithful to their trust, if they do not warn sinners of the fatal consequences of sin, but suffer them to go on unreproved, the *blood* of those that perish through their carelessness, *will be required at their hand*, i. e. it shall be charged upon them in the day of account, that it was owing to their unfaithfulness that such and such precious souls perished in sin; for who knows but if they had had fair warning given them, they might have fled in time *from the wrath to come?* And if it contract so heinous a guilt as it doth to be accessary to the murther of a dying body, what is it to be accessary to the ruin of an immortal soul?

6. That if ministers do their duty in giving warning to sinners, though the warning be not taken, yet they may have this satisfaction, that they are *clear from* their *blood*, and have *delivered their own souls*, though they cannot prevail to deliver theirs. Those that are faithful shall have their reward, though they be not successful.

(2.) Some of those he had to deal with were *righteous*, at least he had reason to think in a judgment of charity that they were so, and he must warn them not to apostatize and *turn away from their righteousness*, ver. 20, 21. We may observe here,

1. That the best men in the world have need to be warned against apostasy, and to be told of the danger they are in of it, and the danger they are in by it: God's servants must be warned, (*Psalm* xix. 11.) that they do not neglect his work, and quit his service. One good means to keep us from falling is, to keep up a holy fear of falling, *Heb.* iv. 1. *Let us therefore fear*; and, *Rom.* xi. 20. even those that *stand by faith* must *not be high-minded, but fear*, and must therefore be warned.

2. There is a *righteousness* which a man may *turn from*, a seeming *righteousness*; from which if men turn, thereby it appears that it was never sincere, how passable, nay, how plausible soever it was; for, *if they had been of us, they would, no doubt, have continued with us*, 1 John ii. 19. There are many that *begin in the spirit*, but *end in the flesh*; that set their faces heavenwards, but look back; that had a first love, but have lost it, and *turned from the holy commandment*.

3. When men *turn from their righteousness*, they soon learn to commit iniquity. When they grow careless and remiss in the duties of God's worship, neglect them, or are negligent in them, they become an easy prey to the tempter: Omissions make way for commissions.

4. *When men turn from their righteousness, and commit iniquity*, it is just with God to *lay stumbling-blocks before them*, that they may grow worse and worse, till they are ripened for destruction. When Pharaoh hardened his heart, God hardened it. When sinners turn their back upon God, desert his service, and so cast a reproach upon it, he doth, in a way of righteous judgment, not only withdraw his restraining grace, and give them up to their own hearts lusts, but order them, by his providence, into such circumstances, as occasion their sin, and hasten their ruin. There are those to whom Christ himself is *a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence*, 1 Pet. ii. 8.

5. The righteousness which men relinquish shall never be remembered to their honour or comfort; it will stand them in no stead in this world or the other: Apostates lose all that they have wrought, their services and sufferings are all in vain, and shall never be brought to account, because not continued in. It is a rule in the law, *Factum non dicitur, quod non perseverat*, Gal. iii. 3, 4.

6. If ministers do not give fair warning, as they ought, of the weakness of the best, their aptness to stumble and fall, the particular temptations they are in, and the fatal consequences of apostasy, the ruin of those that do apostatize will be laid at their door, and they shall answer for it. Not but that there are those who are warned against it, and yet *turn from their righteousness*; but that case is not put here, as was concerning the wicked man; but, on the contrary, that a *righteous man* being warned, takes the warning, and *doth not sin*, ver. 21. for if you *give instruction to a wise man, he will be yet wiser*. We must not only not flatter the wicked, but not flatter even the righteous, as if they were perfectly safe any where on this side heaven.

7. If ministers give warning, and people take it, it is well for both; nothing more beautiful than *a wise reprover upon an obedient ear*; the one *shall live, because he is warned*, and the other *has delivered his soul*. What can a good minister desire more, than to *save himself, and those that hear him?* 1 Tim. iv. 16.

22. ¶ And the hand of the LORD was there upon me, and he said unto me, Arise, go forth into the plain, and I will there talk with thee. 23. Then I arose, and went forth into the plain, and behold, the glory of the

LORD ſtood there, as the glory which I ſaw by the river of Chebar; and I fell on my face. 24. Then the ſpirit entred into me, and ſet me upon my feet, and ſpake with me, and ſaid unto me, Go, ſhut thy ſelf within thine houſe. 25. But thou, O ſon of man, behold, they ſhall put bands upon thee, and ſhall bind thee with them, and thou ſhalt not go out among them. 26. And I will make thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth, that thou ſhalt be dumb, and ſhalt not be to them a reprover, for they *are* a rebellious houſe. 27. But when I ſpeak with thee, I will open thy mouth, and thou ſhalt ſay unto them, Thus ſaith the LORD God, He that heareth, let him hear; and he that forbeareth, let him forbear: for they *are* a rebellious houſe.

After all this large and magnificent diſcovery which God had made of himſelf to the prophet, and the full inſtructions he had given him how to deal with thoſe to whom he ſent him with an ample commiſſion, we would have expected preſently to ſee him preaching the word of God to a great congregation of Iſrael; but here we find it quite otherwiſe: His work here at firſt ſeems not at all proportionable to the pomp of his call.

(1.) We have him here retired for further learning. By his unwillingneſs to go, it ſhould ſeem as if he were not ſo throughly convinced as he might have been of the ability of him that ſent him to bear him out; and therefore, to hearten him againſt the difficulties he foreſaw, God will favour him with another viſion of his glory, which (if any thing) would put life into him, and animate him for his work. In order to this, God calls him out *to the plain*, (ver. 22.) and there he will have ſome *talk with him*. See and admire the condeſcenſion of God in converſing thus familiarly with a man, a *ſon of man*, a poor captive, nay, with a ſinful man, that, when God ſent him, *went in bitterneſs of ſpirit*, and was at this time out of humour with his work! and let us own our ſelves for ever indebted to the mediation of Chriſt for this bleſſed intercourſe and communion between God and man, between heaven and earth. See here the benefit of ſolitude, and how much it befriends contemplation! It is very comfortable to be alone with God, withdrawn from the world for converſe with him; to hear from him, to ſpeak to him; and a good man will ſay, he is never leſs alone, than when thus alone.

Ezekiel *went forth into the plain* more willingly than he went *among them of the captivity*, ver. 15. for they that know what it is to have communion with God, cannot but prefer that before any converſe with this world, eſpecially ſuch as is commonly met with. He *went out into the plain*, and there he ſaw the ſame viſion that he had ſeen *by the river of Chebar*; for God is not tied to places. Note, Thoſe who follow God, ſhall meet with his conſolations wherever they go. God called him out to *talk with him*, but did more than that, he ſhewed him his *glory*, ver. 23. We are not now to expect ſuch viſions, but we muſt own we have a favour done us no way inferior, if we ſo by faith *behold the glory of the Lord*, as to be *changed into the ſame image, by the Spirit of the Lord*; and this *honour have all his ſaints*; *Praiſe ye the Lord*, 2 Cor. iii. 18.

(2.) We have him here reſtrained from further teaching for the preſent. When he ſaw *the glory of the Lord*, he *fell on his face*, being ſtruck with an awe of God's majeſty, and a dread of his diſpleaſure; but *the ſpirit entered into* him, to raiſe him up, and then he recovered himſelf, and got *upon his feet*, and heard what the ſpirit whiſpered to him, which is very ſurprizing: One would have expected now that God ſhould ſend him directly to the chief place of concourſe, ſhould give him favour in the eyes of his brethren, and make him and his meſſage acceptable to them; that he ſhould have a wider *door* of opportunity *opened to him*, and that God ſhould give him a door of utterance to open his mouth boldly; but what is here ſaid to him is the reverſe of all this.

1. Inſtead of ſending him to a publick aſſembly, he orders him to confine himſelf to his own lodgings: *Go, ſhut thy ſelf within thy houſe*, ver. 24. He was not willing to appear in publick, and when he did, the people did not regard him, nor ſhew him the reſpect he deſerved, and, as a juſt rebuke both to him and them, to him for his ſhyneſs of them, and to them for their coldneſs towards him, God forbids him to appear in publick. Note, Our choice is often made our puniſhment; and it is a righteous thing with God to remove teachers into corners, when they, or their people, or both, grow indifferent to ſolemn aſſemblies. Ezekiel muſt ſhut up himſelf, ſome think, to give a ſign of the beſieging of Jeruſalem, in which the people ſhould be cloſely ſhut up, as he was in his houſe, and which he ſpeaks of in the next chapter. He muſt *ſhut himſelf within his houſe*, that he might receive further diſcoveries of the mind of God, and might abundantly furniſh himſelf with ſomething to ſay to the people when he went abroad. We find that *the elders of Judah* viſited him, and *ſat before* him, ſometimes *in his houſe*, chap. viii. 1. to be witneſſes of his ecſtaſies; but it was not till *chap.* xi. 25. that he *ſpake to them of the captivity all the things that the Lord had ſhewed him*. Note, Thoſe that are called to preach, muſt find time to ſtudy, and a great deal of time too; muſt often ſhut themſelves up in their houſes, that they may give attendance to reading and meditation, and ſo their profiting may appear to all.

2. Inſtead of ſecuring him an intereſt in the eſteem and affections of thoſe to whom he ſent him, he tells him, that *they ſhall put bands upon him, and bind him*, ver. 25. either, 1. As a criminal, *they ſhall bind him* in order to the further puniſhing of him as a diſturber of the peace; though they were themſelves ſent into bondage in Babylon for perſecuting the prophets, yet there they continue to perſecute them; or rather, 2. As a diſtracted man, *they* would go about to *bind him* as one beſide himſelf; for to that they imputed his violent motions in his raptures. The captains asked John, *Wherefore came this mad fellow unto thee?* Feſtus ſaid to Paul, *Thou art beſide thy ſelf*; and ſo they ſaid of our Lord Jeſus, *Mark* iii. 21. Perhaps, this was the reaſon why he muſt keep within doors, becauſe otherwiſe *they* would *bind him*, under pretence of his being mad, and therefore he muſt not *go out among them*. Juſtly are prophets forbidden to go to thoſe that will abuſe them.

3. Inſtead of *opening* his *lips*, that his *mouth* might *ſhew forth* God's *praiſe*, God ſilenced him, made his *tongue cleave to the roof of his mouth*, ſo that he was *dumb* for a conſiderable time, *ver.* 26. The pious captives in Babylon uſed this imprecation upon themſelves, that *if* they did *forget Jeruſalem*, their *tongue* might *cleave to the roof of their mouth*, Pſalm cxxxvii. 6. Ezekiel remembers Jeruſalem more than any of them, and yet his *tongue cleaves to the roof of his mouth*; and he that can ſpeak beſt, is forbidden to ſpeak at all; and the reaſon given is, becauſe *they are a rebellious houſe* to whom he is ſent, and they are not worthy to have him for *a reprover*: He ſhall not give them inſtructions and admonitions, for they are loſt and thrown away upon them. He is before commanded to ſpeak boldly to them, becauſe *they are moſt rebellious*, chap. ii. 7. but ſince that proves to no purpoſe, he is now for that reaſon enjoined ſilence, and ſhall not ſpeak at all to them. Note, Thoſe whoſe hearts are hardened againſt conviction, are juſtly deprived of the means of conviction. Why ſhould not the reprovers be dumb, if, after long trials, it be found that the reproved reſolve to be deaf? If Ephraim be *joined to idols*, *let him alone*. *Thou ſhalt be dumb, and not be a reprover*; implying, that unleſs he were dumb, he would be reproving; if he could ſpeak at all, he would witneſs againſt the wickedneſs of the wicked.

But when God *ſpeaks with* him, and deſigns to ſpeak by him, he *will open* his *mouth*, ver. 27. Note, Though God's prophets may be ſilenced a while, there will come a time when God will give them the opening of the mouth again. And when God ſpeaks to his miniſters, he not only opens their ears to hear what he ſaith, but opens their mouth to return an anſwer. Moſes that had a veil on his face when he went down to the people, took it off when he went up again to God, *Exod.* xxxiv. 34.

4. Inſtead of giving him aſſurance of ſucceſs when he ſhould at any time ſpeak to the people, he here leaves the matter very doubtful, and Ezekiel muſt not perplex and diſquiet himſelf about it, but let it be as it will; *he that heareth, let him hear*, and he is welcome to the comfort of it; *let him hear, and his ſoul ſhall live*; but *he that forbeareth, let him forbear* at his peril, and take what comes; *if thou ſcorneſt, thou alone ſhalt bear it*; neither God nor his prophet ſhall be any loſers by it; but the prophet ſhall be rewarded for his faithfulneſs in reproving the ſinner, and God will have the glory of his juſtice in condemning him for not taking the reproof.

CHAP. IV.

Ezekiel was now among the captives in Babylon, but they there had Jeruſalem ſtill upon their hearts; the pious captives looked towards it with an eye of faith, as Daniel, chap. vi. 10. *the preſumptuous ones looked towards it with an eye of pride, and flattered themſelves with a conceit that they ſhould ſhortly return thither again; they that remained correſponded with the captives, and, it is likely, buoyed them up with hopes that all would be well yet, as long as Jeruſalem was ſtanding in its ſtrength; and, perhaps, upbraided thoſe with their folly who had ſurrendered at firſt; therefore, to take down this preſumption, God gives the prophet, in this chapter, a very clear and affecting foreſight of the beſieging of Jeruſalem by the Chaldean army, and the calamities which would attend that ſiege. Two things are here repreſented to him in viſion,* 1. *The fortifications that ſhould be raiſed againſt the city; this is ſignified by the prophet's laying ſiege to the portraiture of Jeruſalem,* ver. 1,—3. *and lying firſt on one ſide, and then on the other ſide before it,* ver. 4,—8. 2. *The famine that ſhould rage within the city; this is ſignified by his eating very coarſe fare, and confining himſelf to a little of it, ſo long as this typical repreſentation laſted,* ver. 9,—17.

1. THOU alſo, ſon of man, take thee a tile, and lay it before thee, and pourtray upon it the city, *even* Jeruſalem; 2. And lay ſiege againſt it, and build a fort againſt it, and caſt a mount againſt it: ſet the camp alſo againſt it, and ſet *battering* rams againſt it round about. 3. Moreover, take thou unto thee an iron pan, and ſet it *for* a wall of iron between thee and the city, and ſet thy face againſt it, and it ſhall be beſieged, and thou ſhalt lay ſiege againſt it: this *ſhall be* a ſign to the houſe of Iſrael. 4. Lie thou alſo upon thy left

left ſide, and lay the iniquity of the houſe of Iſrael upon it: *according* to the number of the days that thou ſhalt lie upon it, thou ſhalt bear their iniquity. 5. For I have laid upon thee the years of their iniquity, according to the number of the days, three hundred and ninety days: ſo ſhalt thou bear the iniquity of the houſe of Iſrael. 6. And when thou haſt accompliſhed them, lie again on thy right ſide, and thou ſhalt bear the iniquity of the houſe of Judah forty days: I have appointed thee each day for a year. 7. Therefore thou ſhalt ſet thy face toward the ſiege of Jeruſalem, and thine arm *ſhall be* uncovered, and thou ſhalt propheſy againſt it. 8. And behold, I will lay bands upon thee, and thou ſhalt not turn thee from one ſide to another, till thou haſt ended the days of thy ſiege.

The prophet is here ordered to repreſent to himſelf and others, by ſigns which would be proper and powerful to ſtrike the fancy, and to affect the mind, *the ſiege of Jeruſalem*, and this amounted to a prediction.

1. He was ordered to engrave a draught of Jeruſalem upon a tile, *ver.* 1. It was Jeruſalem's honour that while ſhe kept her integrity God had *graven her upon the palms of his hands*, Iſa. xlix. 15. and the names of the tribes were engraven in precious ſtones on the breaſtplate of the high-prieſt; but now *the faithful city* is *become a harlot*, a worthleſs, brittle tile, or brick, is thought good enough to *pourtray it upon*: This the prophet muſt lay before him, that the eye may affect the heart.

2. He was ordered to build little forts againſt this pourtraiture of the city, reſembling the batteries raiſed by the beſiegers, *ver.* 2. Between the city that was beſieged, and himſelf that was the beſieger, he was to ſet up an *iron pan*, as an *iron wall*, ver. 3. This repreſented the inflexible reſolution of both ſides; the Chaldeans reſolved, whatever it coſt them, they would make themſelves maſters of the city, and would never quit it till they had conquered it; on the other ſide, the Jews reſolved never to capitulate, but to hold out to the laſt extremity.

3. He was ordered to lie upon his ſide before it, as it were to ſurround it, repreſenting the Chaldean army lying before it, to block it up, to keep the meat from going in, and the mouths from going out. He was to lie on his left ſide *three hundred and ninety days*, ver. 5. about thirteen months; the ſiege of Jeruſalem is computed to laſt eighteen months, *Jer.* lii. 4, 5, 6. but if we deduct from that five months interval, when the beſiegers withdrew from the approach of Pharaoh's army, *Jer.* xxxvii. 5, 6, 7, 8. the number of the days of the cloſe ſiege will be *three hundred and ninety*. Yet that alſo had another ſignification; *the three hundred and ninety days*, according to the prophetick dialect, ſignified three hundred and ninety years; and when the prophet lies ſo many days on his ſide, he bears the guilt of that iniquity which *the houſe of Iſrael*, i. e. the ten tribes had born three hundred and ninety years, reckoning from their firſt apoſtaſy under Jeroboam, to the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, which compleated the ruin of thoſe ſmall remains of them that had incorporated with Judah. He is then to lie forty days *upon his right ſide*, and ſo long to bear *the iniquity of the houſe of Judah*, the kingdom of the two tribes, becauſe the meaſure-filling ſins of that people were thoſe which they were guilty of during the laſt forty years before their captivity, ſince the thirteenth year of Joſiah, when Jeremiah began to propheſy, *Jer.* i. 1. Or, as ſome reckon it, ſince the eighteenth, when the book of the law was found, and the people renewed their covenant with God; when they perſiſted in their impieties and idolatries, notwithſtanding they had ſuch a prophet, and ſuch a prince, and were brought into the bond of ſuch a covenant, what could be expected but ruin without remedy? Judah, that hath ſuch helps and advantages for reformation, fills the meaſure of their iniquity in leſs time than Iſrael doth. Now we are not to think that the prophet lay conſtantly night and day upon his ſide, but every day, for ſo many days together, at a certain time of the day, when he received viſits, and company came in, he was found lying *three hundred and ninety days on his left ſide*, and *forty days on his right ſide*, before his portraiture of Jeruſalem, which all that ſaw might eaſily underſtand to mean the cloſe beſieging of that city; and people would be flocking in daily, ſome for curioſity, and ſome for conſcience, at the hour appointed, to ſee it, and make their different remarks upon it.

His being found conſtantly on the ſame ſide, as if *bands were laid upon him* (as indeed they were by the divine command) ſo that he could not *turn him from one ſide to another till he had ended the days of the ſiege*, did plainly repreſent the cloſe and conſtant continuance of the beſiegers about the city, during that number of days till they had gained their point.

4. He was ordered to proſecute the ſiege with vigour, *ver.* 7. *Thou ſhalt ſet thy face towards the ſiege of Jeruſalem*, as wholly intent upon it, and reſolved to carry it; ſo the Chaldeans would be, and neither bribed nor forced to withdraw from it. Nebuchadnezzar's reſentments of Zedekiah's treachery in breaking his league with him, made him very furious in puſhing on this ſiege, that he might chaſtiſe the inſolence of that faithleſs prince and people; and his army promiſed themſelves a rich booty of that pompous city, ſo that both ſet their faces againſt it, for they were very reſolute. Nor were they leſs active and induſtrious, exerting themſelves to the utmoſt in all the operations of the ſiege, which the prophet was to repreſent by the *uncovering of his arm*, or, as ſome read it, the *ſtretching out* of his arm, as it were to deal blows about without mercy. When God is about to do ſome great work, he is ſaid to *make bare his arm*, Iſa. lii. 10. In ſhort, The Chaldeans will go about their buſineſs, and go on in it, as men in earneſt, that reſolve to go through with it.

Now, 1. This is intended to be a *ſign to the houſe of Iſrael*, ver, 3. both to them in Babylon that were eye-witneſſes of what the prophet did, and to them alſo who remained in their own land, who would hear the report of it. The prophet was *dumb*, and *could not ſpeak*, chap. iii. 26. but as his ſilence had a voice, and upbraided the people with their deafneſs, ſo even God then *left not himſelf without witneſs*, but ordered him to make ſigns, as dumb men uſe to do, and as Zecharias did when he was dumb, and by them to *make known his mind*, that is, the mind of God to the people. And thus likewiſe the people were upbraided with their ſtupidity and dulneſs, that they were not capable of being taught, as men of ſenſe are, by words, but muſt be taught, as children are, by pictures, or, as deaf men are, by ſigns. Or, perhaps, they are hereby upbraided with their malice againſt the prophet: had he ſpoken in words at length what was ſignified by theſe figures; they would have entangled him in his talk, would have indited him for treaſonable expreſſions, for they knew how to *make a man an offender for a word*, Iſa. xxix. 21. to avoid which he is ordered to make uſe of ſigns. Or, the prophet made uſe of ſigns for the ſame reaſon that Chriſt made uſe of parables, that *hearing they might hear, and not underſtand*, and *ſeeing they might ſee, and not perceive*, Matt. xiii. 14, 15. They would not underſtand what was plain, and therefore ſhall be taught by that which is difficult; and herein the Lord was righteous.

2. Thus the prophet *propheſies againſt Jeruſalem*, ver. 7. and there were thoſe who not only underſtood it ſo, but were the more affected with it by its being ſo repreſented; for images to the eye commonly make deeper impreſſions upon the mind than words can; and for this reaſon ſacraments are inſtituted to repreſent divine things, that we might ſee and believe, might ſee and be affected with thoſe things; and we may expect this benefit by them, and a bleſſing to go along with them, whilſt (as the prophet here) we make uſe only of ſuch ſigns as God himſelf has expreſly appointed, which we muſt conclude are the fitteſt. Note, The power of imagination, if it be rightly uſed, and kept under the direction and correction of reaſon and faith, may be of good uſe to kindle and excite pious and devout affections; as it was here to Ezekiel and his attendants. *Methinks I ſee*, ſo and ſo, my ſelf dying, time expiring, the world on fire, the dead riſing, the great tribunal ſit, and the like, may have a mighty good influence upon us: for fancy is like fire, a *good ſervant, but a bad maſter*.

3. This whole tranſaction hath that in it which the prophet might, with a good colour of reaſon, have boggled at and excepted againſt, and yet, in obedience to God's command, and in execution of his office, he did it according to order. (1.) It ſeemed childiſh and ludicrous, and beneath his gravity, and there were thoſe that would ridicule him for it; but he knew the divine appointment put honour enough upon that which otherwiſe ſeemed mean, to ſave his reputation in the doing of it. (2.) It was toilſome and tireſome to do as he did; but our eaſe and credit muſt be ſacrificed to our duty, and we muſt never call God's ſervice in any inſtance of it a hard ſervice. (3.) It could not but be very much againſt the grain with him to appear thus againſt Jeruſalem, the city of God, the holy city, to act as an enemy againſt a place to which he was ſo good a friend; but he is a prophet, and muſt follow his inſtructions, not his affections, and muſt plainly preach the ruin of a ſinful place, though its welfare is what he paſſionately deſires and earneſtly prays for.

4. All this that the prophet ſets before the children of his people concerning the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, is deſigned to bring them to repentance, by ſhewing them ſin the provoking cauſe of this deſtruction, ſin the ruin of that once flouriſhing city, than which ſure nothing could be more effectual to make them hate ſin, and turn from it; while he thus in lively colours deſcribes the calamity, with a great deal of pain and uneaſineſs to himſelf, he is *bearing the iniquity of Iſrael and Judah*. Look here (ſaith he) and ſee what work ſin makes, what an *evil and bitter thing it is to depart from God*; this comes of ſin, your ſin, and the ſin of your fathers; let that therefore be the daily matter of your ſorrow and ſhame now in your captivity, that you may make your peace with God, and he may return in mercy to you. But obſerve, It is a day of puniſhment for a year of ſin; *I have appointed thee each day for a year*. The ſiege is a calamity of 390 days, in which God reckons for the iniquity of 390 years; juſtly therefore do they acknowledge that God had *puniſhed them leſs than their iniquity deſerved*, Ezra ix. 13. But let impenitent ſinners know, that though now God is long-ſuffering towards them, in the other world there is an everlaſting puniſhment. When God *laid bands* upon the prophet, it was to ſhew them how they were *bound with the cords of their own tranſgreſſion*, Lam. i. 14. and therefore they were now *holden in the cords of affliction*. But we may well think of the prophet's caſe with compaſſion, when God laid upon him the bands

of

of duty, as he doth on all his miniſters, 1 *Cor.* ix. 16. *Neceſſity is laid upon me, and wo unto me if I preach not the goſpel*; and yet men laid upon him bonds of reſtraint, *chap.* iii. 25. but under both it is ſatisfaction enough that they are ſerving the intereſts of God's kingdom among men.

9. ¶ Take thou alſo unto thee, wheat, and barley, and beans, and lentiles, and millet, and fitches, and put them in one veſſel, and make thee bread thereof, *according* to the number of the days that thou ſhalt lie upon thy ſide: three hundred and ninety days ſhalt thou eat thereof. 10. And thy meat which thou ſhalt eat *ſhall be* by weight twenty ſhekels a day: from time to time ſhalt thou eat it. 11. Thou ſhalt drink alſo water by meaſure, the ſixth part of an hin: from time to time ſhalt thou drink. 12. And thou ſhalt eat it *as* barley-cakes, and thou ſhalt bake it with dung that cometh out of man, in their ſight. 13. And the LORD ſaid, Even thus ſhall the children of Iſrael eat their defiled bread among the Gentiles, whither I will drive them. 14. Then ſaid I, Ah LORD God, behold, my ſoul hath not been polluted: for from my youth up even till now, have I not eaten of that which dieth of itſelf, or is torn in pieces, neither came there abominable fleſh into my mouth. 15. Then he ſaid unto me, Lo, I have given thee cows dung for mans dung, and thou ſhalt prepare thy bread therewith. 16. Moreover, he ſaid unto me, Son of man, behold, I will break the ſtaff of bread in Jeruſalem, and they ſhall eat bread by weight, and with care, and they ſhall drink water by meaſure, and with aſtoniſhment. 17. That they may want bread and water, and be aſtonied one with another, and conſume away for their iniquity.

The beſt expoſition of this part of Ezekiel's prediction of Jeruſalem's deſolation is Jeremiah's Lamentation of it, *Lam.* iv. 3, 4, *&c.* and *chap.* v. 10. where he pathetically deſcribes the terrible famine that was in Jeruſalem during the ſiege, and the ſad effects of it. The prophet here, to affect the people with the foreſight of it, muſt confine himſelf for 390 days to coarſe fare, and ſhort commons, and that ill dreſſed, for they ſhould want both food and fuel.

1. His meat, for the quality of it, was to be of the worſt bread made of but little wheat and barley, and the reſt of beans, and lentiles, and millet, and fitches, ſuch as we feed horſes, or fatted hogs with, and this mixed, as mill-corn, or as that in the beggar's bag, that has a diſh full of one ſort of corn at one houſe, and of another at another's houſe; of ſuch corn as this muſt the prophet's bread be made, while he underwent the fatigue of lying on his ſide, and needed ſomething better to ſupport him, *ver.* 9. Note, It is our wiſdom not to be too fond of dainties, and pleaſant bread, becauſe we know not what hard meat we may be tied to, nay, and may be glad of before we die. The meaneſt ſort of food is better than we deſerve, and therefore muſt not be deſpiſed or waſted, nor muſt thoſe that uſe it be looked upon with diſdain, becauſe we know not what may be our own lot.

2. For the quantity of it, it was to be of the leaſt that a man could be kept alive with, to ſignify that the beſieged ſhould be reduced to ſhort allowance; and ſhould hold out till all *the bread in the city was ſpent*, Jer. xxxvii. 21. The prophet muſt eat but *twenty ſhekels* weight of bread a day, *ver.* 10. that was about ten ounces; and he muſt drink but the *ſixth part of a hin of water*, that was half a pint, about eight ounces, *ver.* 11. The ſtint of the Leſſian diet is fourteen ounces of meat, and ſixteen of drink. The prophet in Babylon had bread enough, and to ſpare, and was by the river ſide, where there was plenty of water, and yet that he might confirm his own prediction, and be a ſign to the children of Iſrael, God obligeth him to live thus ſparingly, and he ſubmits to it. Note, God's ſervants muſt learn to endure hardneſs, and to deny themſelves the uſe of lawful delights, when they may thereby ſerve the glory of God, evidence the ſincerity of their faith, and expreſs their ſympathy with their brethren in affliction. The body muſt be *kept under and brought into ſubjection*; nature is content wit a little, grace with leſs, but luſt with nothing: It is good to ſtint ourſelves of choice, that we may the better bear it, if ever we ſhould come to be ſtinted by neceſſity. And in times of publick diſtreſs and calamity it ill becomes us to make much of ourſelves, as thoſe that *drank wine in bowls*, and *were not grieved for the affliction of Joſeph*, Amos vi. 4, 5, 6.

3. For the dreſſing of it he muſt *bake it with man's dung*, ver. 12. that muſt be dried and ſerve for fuel to heat his oven with; the thought of it would almoſt turn ones ſtomach; yet the coarſe bread thus baked he muſt *eat as barley cakes*, i. e. as freely as if it were the ſame bread he had been uſed to. This nauſeous piece of cookery he muſt exerciſe publickly *in their ſight*, that they might be the more affected with the calamity approaching, which was ſignified by it; that in the extremity of the famine they ſhould not only have nothing that was dainty, but nothing that was cleanly about them; but muſt take up with what they could get. *To the hungry ſoul every bitter thing is ſweet.*

This circumſtance of the ſign, the baking of his bread with man's dung, the prophet, with ſubmiſſion, humbly deſired might be diſpenſed with, *ver.* 14. it ſeemed to have in it ſomething of a ceremonial pollution, for there was a law that man's dung ſhould *be covered with earth*, that God might *ſee no unclean thing in their camp*, Deut. xxiii. 13, 14. And muſt he go gather a thing ſo offenſive, and uſe it in the dreſſing his meat in the ſight of the people? *Ah, Lord God*, ſaith he, *behold, my ſoul has not been polluted*, and I am afraid leſt by this it be polluted. Note, The pollution of the ſoul by ſin is what good people dread more than any thing; and yet ſometimes tender conſciences fear it without cauſe, and perplex themſelves with ſcruples about lawful things, as the prophet here, who had not yet learned, that it is not that which *goes into the mouth that defiles the man*, Matt. xv. 11. But obſerve, He doth not plead, Lord, from my youth I have been brought up delicately, and never uſed to any thing but what was clean and nice; and there were thoſe who were ſo brought up that in the ſiege of Jeruſalem did *embrace dunghils*, Lam. iv. 5. but that he had been brought up conſcientiouſly, and had never eaten any thing that was forbidden by the law, that *died of itſelf*, or was *torn in pieces*: and therefore, Lord, do not put this upon me now: thus Peter pleaded, *Acts* x. 14. *Lord, I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean.* Note, It will be comfortable to us when we are reduced to hardſhips if our hearts can witneſs for us that we have always been careful to abſtain from ſin, even from little ſins, and the *appearances of evil.* Whatever God commands us we may be ſure is good; but if we be put upon any thing that we apprehend to be evil, we ſhould argue againſt it from this conſideration, that hitherto we have preſerved our purity, and ſhall we loſe it now? Now, becauſe Ezekiel with a manifeſt tenderneſs of conſcience made this ſcruple, God diſpenſed with him in this matter. Note, Thoſe who have power in their hands ſhould not be rigorous in preſſing their commands upon thoſe that are diſſatisfied concerning them, yea, though their diſſatisfactions be groundleſs, or ariſing from education and long uſage, but ſhould recede from them rather than grieve or offend the weak, or put a ſtumbling-block before them; in conformity to the example of God's condeſcenſion to Ezekiel, though we are ſure his authority is unconteſtable, and all his commands wiſe and good. God allowed Ezekiel to uſe *cow's dung*, inſtead of *man's dung*, ver. 15. This is an implicit reflection upon man, as intimating, that he being polluted with ſin, his filthineſs is more nauſeous and odious than that of any other creature; *How much more abominable and filthy is man?* Job xv. 16.

Now this ſign is particularly explained here; it ſignified,

1. That thoſe which remained in Jeruſalem ſhould be brought to extream miſery for want of neceſſary food; all ſupplies being cut off by the beſiegers, the city would ſoon find a want of the country, for *the king himſelf is ſerved of the field*; and thus *the ſtaff of bread* would be *broken in Jeruſalem*, ver. 16. God would not only take away from the bread its power to nouriſh, ſo that *they ſhall eat and not be ſatisfied*, Lev. xxvi. 26. but take away the bread itſelf, *Iſa.* iii. 1. So that what little remained ſhould be *eaten by weight*, ſo much a day, ſo much a head, that they might have an equal ſhare, and might make it laſt as long as poſſible. But to what purpoſe? when they could not make it laſt always; and the beſieged muſt be tired out before the beſiegers. They ſhall eat and drink *with care*, to make it go as far as might be, and with *aſtoniſhment*, when they ſaw it almoſt ſpent, and knew not which way to look for a recruit. They ſhall *be aſtonied one with another*; whereas it uſed to be ſome alleviation of a calamity to have others ſhare with us in it, *(Solamen miſeris ſocios habuiſſe doloris)* and ſome eaſe to the ſpirit to complain of the burthen; it ſhould be an aggravation of the miſery that it was univerſal, and their complaining to one another ſhould but make them all the more uneaſy, and increaſe the *aſtoniſhment*; and the event ſhall be as ill as their fears, they cannot make it worſe than it is, for *they ſhall conſume away for their iniquity*; multitudes of them ſhall die of famine, a lingring death, worſe than that by *the ſword*, Lam. iv. 9. they ſhall die, ſo as to *feel themſelves die*; and it is ſin that brings all this miſery upon them; *they ſhall conſume away in their iniquity*, ſo it may be read. They ſhall continue hardened and impenitent, and ſhall die in their ſins, which is more miſerable than to die on a dunghil.

Now, (1.) Let us ſee here what woful work ſin makes with a people, and acknowledge the righteouſneſs of God herein. Time was when *Jeruſalem was filled with the fineſt of the wheat*, Pſal. cxlvii. 14. but now it would be glad of the coarſeſt, and cannot have it. *Fulneſs of bread*, as it was one of Jeruſalem's mercies, ſo it was become one of her ſins, *Ezek.* xvi. 49. The plenty was abuſed to luxury and exceſs, which was therefore thus juſtly puniſhed with famine. It is a righteous thing with God to deprive us of thoſe enjoyments which we have made the food and fuel of our luſts.

(2.) Let us ſee what reaſon we have to bleſs God for plenty; not only for the fruits of the earth, but for the freedom of commerce,

merce, that the husbandman can have money for his bread; and the tradesman bread for his money; that there is not only abundance in the field, but in the market, that those who live in cities and great towns, though they *sow not*, neither do they *reap*, yet are fed from day to day with food convenient.

2. It signified that those who were carried into captivity should be forced to *eat their defiled bread among the Gentiles*, ver. 13. *i. e.* to eat meat made up by Gentile hands, otherwise than according to the law of the Jewish church, which they were always taught to call *defiled*, and which they would have as great an aversion to as a man would have to bread prepared with dung, that is, (as, perhaps, it may be understood) kneaded and molded with dung. Daniel and his fellows confined themselves to *pulse and water*, rather than they would *eat the portion of the king's meat* assigned them, because they apprehended it would defile them, *Dan.* i. 8. or they should be forced to eat nasty stinking meat, such as their oppressors would allow them in their slavery, and such as formerly they would have scorned to touch. Because they *served not God* with chearfulness *in the abundance of all things*, God will make them *serve their enemies in the want of all things*.

CHAP. V.

In this chapter we have a farther, and no less terrible denunciation of the judgments of God that were coming with all speed and force upon the Jewish nation, which would utterly ruin it, for when God judgeth he will overcome. This destruction of Judah and Jerusalem is here, (1.) Represented by a sign, the cutting, and burning, and scattering of hair, ver. 1,—4. (2.) *That sign is expounded and applied to Jerusalem*, 1. *Sin is charged upon Jerusalem as the cause of this desolation, contempt of God's law*, ver. 5,—7. *and profanation of his sanctuary*, ver. 11. 2. *Wrath is threatned, great wrath*, ver. 8, 9, 10, *a variety of miseries*, ver. 12, 16, 17. *such as should be their reproach and ruin*, ver. 13,—15.

1. AND thou son of man, take thee a sharp knife, take thee a barbers rasor, and cause *it* to pass upon thine head, and upon thy beard, then take thee balances to weigh, and divide the *hair*. 2. Thou shalt burn with fire a third part in the midst of the city, when the days of the siege are fulfilled; and thou shalt take a third part, *and* smite about it with a knife; and a third part thou shalt scatter in the wind, and I will draw out a sword after them. 3. Thou shalt also take thereof a few in number, and bind them in thy skirts. 4. Then take of them again, and cast them into the midst of the fire, and burn them in the fire: *for* thereof shall a fire come forth into all the house of Israel.

We have here the sign by which the utter destruction of Jerusalem is set forth; and here, as before, the prophet is himself the sign, that the people might see how much he affected himself with, and interested himself in, the case of Jerusalem, and how near it lay to his heart, even then when he foretold the desolations of it, he was so much concerned about it, as to take what was done to it as done to himself, so far was he from desiring the woful day.

1. He must *shave off the hair of his head and beard*, ver. 1. which signified God's utter rejecting and abandoning that people, as a useless worthless generation, such as could well be spared, nay, such as it would be his honour to part with; his judgment, and all the instruments he made use of in cutting them off were this *sharp knife* and this *rasor*, that were proper to be made use of, and would do execution. Jerusalem had been the head, but being degenerated, was become as the *hair*, which when it grows thick and long is but a burthen which a man wishes to get clear of, as God of the sinners of Zion, *Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries*, Isa. i. 24. Ezekiel must not cut off that hair only which was superfluous, but *cut it all off*, noting the full end that God would make of Jerusalem. The hair that would not be trimmed and kept neat and clean by the admonitions of the prophets, must be all shaved off by an utter destruction. Those will be ruined that will not be reformed.

2. He must *weigh the hair* and *divide it into three parts*. This intimates the very exact directing of God's judgments according to equity; by him men and their actions are *weighed* in the unerring balance of truth and righteousness; and the proportion which divine justice observes in punishing some by one judgment, and others by another, but one way or other they shall all be met with. Some make the shaving of the hair to note the loss of their liberty and of their honour: it was looked upon as a mark of ignominy, as in the disgrace Hanan put on David's embassadors; it notes also the loss of their joy, for they shaved their heads upon occasion of great mourning; I may add the loss of their Nazariteship, for the shaving of the head was a period to that vow, *Numb.* vi. 18. and Jerusalem was now no longer looked upon as a *holy city*.

3. He must dispose of the hair so as that it might all be destroyed or dispersed, *ver.* 2. (1.) One *third part* must *be burnt in the midst of the city*, noting the multitudes that should perish by famine and pestilence, and, perhaps, many in the conflagration of the city, *when the days of the siege were fulfilled*; or the laying of that glorious city in ashes might well be looked upon as a third part of the destruction threatened. (2.) Another third part was to be *cut in pieces with a knife*, representing the many that, during the siege, were slain by the sword, in their sallies out upon the besiegers, and especially when the city was taken by storm, the Chaldeans being then most furious and the Jews most feeble. (3.) Another third part was to be *scattered in the wind*, noting the carrying away of some into the land of the conqueror, and the flight of others into the neighbouring countries for shelter; so that that they were hurried some one way and some another, like loose hairs in the wind. But lest they should think that this dispersion would be their escape, God adds, *and I will draw out a sword after them*; so that wherever they go evil shall pursue them. Note, God has variety of judgments wherewith to accomplish the destruction of a sinful people, and to make an end when he begins.

4. He must preserve a small quantity of the third sort that were to be *scattered in the wind*, and *bind them in his skirts*, as one would bind that which he is very mindful and careful of, *ver.* 3. This signified, perhaps, that little handful of people which were left under the government of Gedaliah, who, it was hoped, would keep possession of the land when the body of the people were carried into captivity. Thus God would have done well for them if they would have done well for themselves. But these few that were reserved must be taken and *cast into the fire*, ver. 4. when Gedaliah and his friends were slain, the people that put themselves under his protection were scattered, some gone into Egypt, others carried off by the Chaldeans, and, in short, the land totally cleared of them, then this was fulfilled, for out of those combustions, *a fire came forth into all the house of Israel*; who, as fuel upon the fire, kindled and consumed one another. Note, It is ill with a people when those are taken away in wrath that seemed to be marked for monuments of mercy, for then there is no remnant or escaping, none shut up or left.

5. ¶ Thus saith the LORD God, This *is* Jerusalem: I have set it in the midst of the nations and countries *that are* round about her. 6. And she hath changed my judgments into wickedness more than the nations, and my statutes more than the countries that *are* round about her: for they have refused my judgments and my statutes, they have not walked in them. 7. Therefore thus saith the LORD God, Because ye multiplied more than the nations that *are* round about you, *and* have not walked in my statutes, neither have kept my judgments, neither have done according to the judgments of the nations that *are* round about you: 8. Therefore thus saith the LORD God, Behold, I, even I *am* against thee, and will execute judgments in the midst of thee, in the sight of the nations. 9. And I will do in thee that which I have not done, and whereunto I will not do any more the like; because of all thine abominations. 10. Therefore the fathers shall eat the sons in the midst of thee, and the sons shall eat their fathers; and I will execute judgments in thee, and the whole remnant of thee will I scatter into all the winds. 11. Wherefore, *as* I live, saith the LORD God, Surely because thou hast defiled my sanctuary with all thy detestable things, and with all thine abominations, therefore will I also diminish *thee*, neither shall mine eye spare, neither will I have any pity. 12. ¶ A third part of thee shall die with the pestilence, and with famine shall they be consumed in the midst of thee; and a third part shall fall by the sword round about thee; and I will scatter a third part into all the winds, and I will draw out a sword after them. 13. Thus shall mine anger be accomplished, and I will cause my fury to rest upon them, and I will be comforted: and they shall know that I the LORD have spoken *it* in my zeal, when I have accomplished my fury in them. 14. Moreover, I will make thee waste, and a reproach among the nations that *are* round about thee, in the sight of all that pass by. 15. So it shall be a reproach and a taunt, an instruction and an astonishment unto the nations that *are* round about thee, when I shall execute judgments in thee in anger and in fury, and in furious rebukes: I the LORD have spoken *it*. 16. When I I shall send upon them the evil arrows of famine, which shall be for *their* destruction, *and* which I will send to destroy you: and I will increase the famine upon you, and will break your staff of bread. 17. So will I send upon

upon you famine and evil beaſts, and they ſhall bereave thee; and peſtilence and blood ſhall paſs through thee, and I will bring the ſword upon thee: I the LORD have ſpoken *it*.

We have here the reddition of the foregoing ſimilitude; *This is Jeruſalem:* Thus it is uſual in ſcripture language to give the name of the thing ſignified to the ſign; as when Chriſt ſaid, *This is my body.* The prophet's head that was to be ſhaved ſignified Jeruſalem, that by the judgments of God was now to be ſtripped of all its ornaments, to be emptied of all its inhabitants, and to be ſet *naked and bare*, to be *ſhaved with a raſor that is hired*, Iſa. vii. 20. The head of one that was a prieſt, a prophet. a holy perſon was fitteſt to repreſent Jeruſalem the holy city. Now the contents of theſe verſes are much the ſame with what we have often met with, and ſtill ſhall, in the writings of the prophets. Here is,

1. The privileges Jeruſalem was honoured with, *ver.* 5. *I have ſet it in the midſt of the nations and countries that are round about her*, and thoſe famous nations and very conſiderable. Jeruſalem was not ſituated in a remote obſcure corner of the world, far from neighbours, but in the midſt of kingdoms that were populous, polite and civilized, famed for learning, arts and ſciences, and which then made the greateſt figure in the world. But there ſeems to be more in it than ſo. (1.) Jeruſalem was dignified and preferred above the neighbour nations, and their cities, it was *ſet in the midſt* of them as excelling them all, this *holy mountain was exalted above all the hills*, Iſa. ii. 2. *Why leap ye, ye high hills, this is the hill which God deſireth to dwell in*, Pſal. lxviii. 16. Jeruſalem was a city upon a hill, conſpicuous and illuſtrious, and which all the neighbour nations had an eye upon, ſome for good will, ſome for ill will (2.) Jeruſalem was deſigned to have a good influence upon *the nations and countries round about*, was ſet in the midſt of them as a candle upon a candleſtick, to ſpread the light of divine revelation, which ſhe was bleſſed with, to all the dark corners of the neighbour nations, that from them it might diffuſe itſelf farther, even to the ends of the earth. Jeruſalem was ſet *in the midſt* of the nations, to be as the heart in the body, to invigorate this dead world with a divine life, as well as to enlighten this dark world with a divine light, to be an example of every thing that was good. The nations that obſerved what excellent *ſtatutes and judgments* they had, concluded them to be *a wiſe and underſtanding people*, Deut. iv. 6. fit to be conſulted as an oracle, as they were in Solomon's time, 1 *Kings* iv. 34. And had they preſerved this reputation, and made a right uſe of it, what a bleſſing had Jeruſalem been to all the nations about? But failing to be ſo, the accompliſhment of this intention was reſerved for its latter days, when *out of Zion went forth the* goſpel *law, and the word of the Lord* Jeſus *from Jeruſalem*, and there *repentance and remiſſion* began to be preached, and thence the preachers of them *went forth into all nations.* And when that was done Jeruſalem was levelled with the ground. Note, When places and perſons are made great, it is with deſign that they may do good, and that thoſe about them may be the better for them; that their *light may ſhine before men.*

2. The provocations Jeruſalem was guilty of. A very high charge is here drawn up againſt the city, and proved beyond contradiction, ſufficient to juſtify God in ſeizing its privileges, and putting it under military execution.

(1.) She had *not walked in God's ſtatutes*, nor *kept his judgments* ver. 7. nay, they had *refuſed his judgment and his ſtatutes*, ver. 6. they did not do their duty, nay, they *would not*, they ſaid they would not: thoſe *ſtatutes and judgments* which their neighbours admired, they deſpiſed; which they ſhould have ſet before their face, they caſt behind their back. Note, A contempt of the word and law of God opens a door to all manner of iniquity. God's ſtatutes are the terms on which he deals with men, they that refuſe his terms cannot expect his favours.

(2.) She had *changed God's judgments into wickedneſs*, ver. 6. a very high expreſſion of their profaneneſs, that they had not only broken God's laws, but had ſo perverted and abuſed them, that they had made them the excuſe and colour of their wickedneſs; they introduced the abominable cuſtoms and uſages of the heathen, inſtead of God's inſtitutions; this was changing *the truth of God into a lie*, Rom. i. 25. and the *glory of God into ſhame*, Pſal. iv. 2. Note, Thoſe that have been well educated, if they live ill, put the higheſt affront imaginable upon God, as if he were the patron of ſin, and *his judgments* were *turned into wickedneſs.*

(3.) She had been worſe than the neighbour nations, to whom ſhe ſhould have ſet a good example: *She hath changed my judgments*, by idolatries and falſe worſhip, *more than the nations*, ver. 6. and *multiplied*, i. e. multiplied idols and altars, gods and temples, multiplied thoſe things, the unity of which was their praiſe, *more than the nations that were round about.* Iſrael's God is one, and his name one, his altar one; but they not content with this one God, multiplied their gods to that degree, that *according to the number of their cities, ſo were their gods*, and their altars *as heaps in the furrows of the field*; ſo that they exceeded all their neighbours, in having *gods many and lords many.* They corrupted revealed religion more than the Gentiles had corrupted natural religion. Note, If thoſe that have made a profeſſion of religion, and have had a pious education, apoſtatize from it, they are commonly more profane and vicious than thoſe who never made any profeſſion; they have *ſeven other ſpirits more wicked.*

(4.) She had *not done according to the judgments of the nations*, ver. 7. *i. e.* they had not carried it towards their God, though he is the only true God, as the nations had carried it towards their gods, though they were falſe gods; had not been ſo obſervant of him, nor ſo conſtant to him. Hath a nation *changed their gods*, or ſlighted them, ſo as they have? *Jer.* ii. 11. Or, it may refer to their morals; inſtead of reforming their neighbours, they came ſhort of them; and many that were of the *uncircumciſion, kept the righteouſneſs of the law* better than thoſe that were *of the circumciſion*, Rom. ii. 26, 27. Thoſe that had the light of ſcripture did not *according to the judgments* of many that had only the light of nature. Note, There are thoſe who are called chriſtians that will, in the great day, be condemned by the better tempers, and better lives, of ſober heathens.

(5.) The particular crime charged upon Jeruſalem is profaning the holy things, which ſhe had been both intruſted and honoured with, *ver.* 11. *Thou haſt defiled my ſanctuary with all thy deteſtable things*, i. e. with thine idols and idolatries. The images of their pretended deities, and the groves erected in honour of them, were brought into the temple; and the ceremonies uſed by idolaters, were brought into the worſhip of God; thus every thing that is ſacred was polluted. Note, Idols are deteſtable things any where, but more eſpecially ſo in the ſanctuary.

3. The puniſhments that Jeruſalem ſhould fall under for theſe provocations: *Shall not God viſit for theſe things?* No doubt he ſhall. The matter of the ſentence here paſt upon Jeruſalem is very dreadful, and the manner of expreſſion makes it yet more ſo; the judgments are various, and the threatnings of them varied, reiterated, inculcated; that one may well ſay, *Who is able to ſtand in God's ſight when once he is angry?*

1. God will take this work of puniſhing Jeruſalem into his own hands; and *who knows the power of his anger?* and what *a fearful thing it is to fall into his hands?* Obſerve, what a mighty emphaſis is laid upon it, *ver.* 8. *I, even I am againſt thee.* God had been for Jeruſalem, to defend and ſave it; but miſerable is its caſe when he is turned to be its enemy, and fights againſt it. If God be againſt us, the whole creation is at war with us, and nothing can be for us, ſo as to ſtand us in any ſtead. You think it is only the Chaldean army that is againſt you, but they are God's hand, or rather the ſtaff in his hand; it is *I, even I* that *am againſt thee*; not only to ſpeak againſt thee by prophets, but to act againſt thee by providence; *I will execute judgments in thee*, ver. 10. *in the midſt of thee*, ver. 8. not only in the ſuburbs, but in the heart of the city; not only in the borders, but in the bowels of the country. Note, Thoſe that will not obſerve the judgments of God's mouth, ſhall not eſcape the judgments of his hand; and God's judgments, when they come with commiſſion, will penetrate into the midſt of a people, will enter into the ſoul; *into the bowels like water*, and *like oil into the bones, I will execute judgments.* Note, God himſelf undertakes to execute his own judgments, according to the true and full intent of them; whatever are the inſtruments, he is the principal agent.

2. Theſe puniſhments ſhall come from his diſpleaſure; as to the body of the people it ſhall not be a correction in love, but he will *execute judgments in anger, and in fury, and in furious rebukes*, ver. 15. ſtrange expreſſions to come from a God, who hath ſaid, *Fury is not in me*; and who hath declared himſelf *gracious and merciful*, and *ſlow to anger:* But they are deſigned to ſhew the malignity of ſin, and the offence it gives to the juſt and holy God. That muſt needs be a very evil thing which provvokes him to ſuch reſentments, and againſt his own people too, that had been ſo high in his favour, and expreſſed with ſo much ſatisfaction, *ver.* 13. *Mine anger*, which has long been withheld, *ſhall* now *be accompliſhed, and I will cauſe my fury to reſt upon them*, it ſhall not only light upon them, but lie upon them, and fill them as veſſels of wrath, fitted by their own wickedneſs to deſtruction, *and*, juſtice being hereby glorified, *I will be comforted*, i. e. I will be entirely ſatisfied in what I have done. As when God is diſhonoured by the ſins of men he is ſaid to be *grieved*, Pſalm xcv. 10. ſo when he is honoured by their deſtruction he is ſaid to *be comforted.* The ſtruggle between mercy and judgment is over, and in this caſe judgment triumphs, triumphs indeed; for mercy that has been ſo long abuſed is now ſilent, and gives up the cauſe, has not a word more to ſay on the behalf of ſuch an ungrateful, incorrigible people; *mine eye ſhall not ſpare, neither will I have any pity*, ver. 11. Divine compaſſion defers the puniſhment, or mitigates it, or ſupports under it, or ſhortens it, but here is *judgment without mercy*, wrath without any mixture or allay of pity. Theſe expreſſions are thus ſharpened and heightened, perhaps, with deſign to look further to the vengeance of eternal fire, which ſome of the deſtructions we read of in the Old Teſtament were typical of, and particularly that of Jeruſalem; for ſurely it is no where on this ſide hell that this word has its full accompliſhment, *Mine eye ſhall not ſpare*, but *I will cauſe my fury to reſt.* Note, Thoſe that live and die impenitent, will periſh for ever unpitied; there is a day coming when *the Lord will not ſpare.*

3. Puniſhments ſhall be publick and open; *I will execute* theſe *judgments in the ſight of the nations*, ver. 8. the judgments themſelves ſhall be ſo remarkable, as that all the nations far and near ſhall take notice of them; they ſhall be all the talk of that part of the world; and

and the more for the conſpicuouſneſs of the place and people on which they are inflicted. Note, Publick ſins, as they call for publick reproofs, *them that ſin rebuke before all*, ſo, if thoſe prevail not, they call for publick judgments: *He ſtriketh them as wicked men in the open ſight of others*, Job xxxiv. 26. that he may maintain and vindicate the honour of his government, for (as Grotius deſcants upon it here) *why ſhould he ſuffer it to be ſaid, See what wicked lives they lead, that profeſs to be the worſhippers of the only true God!* And as the publickneſs of the judgments will redound to the honour of God, ſo it will ſerve, 1. To aggravate the puniſhment, and to make it lie the more heavy. Jeruſalem being made *waſte*, becomes *a reproach among the nations, in the ſight of all that paſs by*, ver. 14. The more conſpicuous, and the more peculiar any have been in the day of their proſperity, the greater diſgrace attends their fall; and that was Jeruſalem's caſe. The more Jeruſalem had been *a praiſe in the earth*, the more it is now *a reproach and a taunt*, ver. 15. This ſhe was warned of as much as any thing when her glory commenced, 1 *Kings* ix. 8. and this was lamented as much as any thing when it was laid in the duſt, *Lam.* ii. 15. 2. To teach the nations to fear before the God of Iſrael, when they ſaw what a jealous God he is, and how ſeverely he puniſheth ſin, even in thoſe that are neareſt to him. *It ſhall be an inſtruction to the nations*, ver. 15. Jeruſalem ſhould have taught her neighbours the fear of God by her piety and virtue, but ſhe not doing that, God will teach it them by their ruin; for they have reaſon to ſay, *If this be done in the green tree, what ſhall be done in the dry?* If *judgment begin at the houſe of God*, where will it end? If they be thus puniſhed that only had ſome idolaters among them, what will become of us that are all idolaters? Note, The deſtruction of ſome is deſigned for the inſtruction of others. Malefactors are publickly puniſhed *in terrorem*, that others may take warning.

4. Theſe puniſhments, in the kind of them, ſhall be very ſevere and grievous. 1. They ſhall be ſuch as have no precedent or parallel. Their ſins being more provoking than thoſe of others, the judgments executed upon them ſhould be uncommon, *ver.* 9. *I will do in thee that which I have not done* in thee before, though thou haſt long ſince deſerved it; nay, that which I have not done in any other city; this puniſhment of Jeruſalem is ſaid to be *greater than that of Sodom*, Lam. iv. 6. which was the ſoreſt of all that went before it; nay, it is ſuch as *I will not do any more the like*, all the circumſtances taken in, to any other city, till the like comes to be done again to this city, in its final overthrow by the Romans. This is a rhetorical expreſſion of the moſt grievous judgments, like that character of Hezekiah, that there was *none like him, before or after him.* 2. They ſhall be ſuch as will force them to break the ſtrongeſt bonds of natural affection to one another, which will be a juſt puniſhment of them for their wilful breaking of the bonds of their duty to God, *ver.* 10. *The fathers ſhall eat the ſons, and the ſons ſhall eat the fathers*, through the extremity of the famine, or compelled to do it by their barbarous conquerors. 3. There ſhall be a complication of judgments, any one of them terrible enough, and deſolating; but what then would they be when they came all together, and in perfection? Some ſhall be taken away by the plague, *ver.* 12. the *peſtilence ſhall paſs through thee*, ver. 17. ſweeping all before it, as the deſtroying angel; others *ſhall be conſumed with famine*, ſhall gradually waſte away as men in a conſumption, *ver.* 12. this is again inſiſted on, *ver.* 16. *I will ſend upon them the evil arrows of famine*; hunger ſhall pine and pierce them, and wound them to the heart, as if arrows, *evil arrows*, poiſoned darts were ſhot into them; God has many arrows, *evil arrows*, in his quiver, when ſome are diſcharged he hath ſtill more in reſerve; *I will increaſe the famine upon you*; a famine in a bereaved country may decreaſe, as fruits ſpring forth, but a famine in a beſieged city will increaſe of courſe; yet God ſpeaks of it as his act; *I will increaſe* it, *and will break your ſtaff of bread*; will take away the neceſſary ſupports of life, will diſappoint you of all that which you depend upon, ſo that there is no remedy, but you muſt fall to the ground. Life is frail, is weak, is burthened, ſo that if it have not daily bread for its ſtaff to lean upon, it cannot but ſink, and is ſoon gone if that ſtaff be broken. Others *ſhall fall by the ſword round about* Jeruſalem, when they ſally out upon the beſiegers; it is a *ſword* which God *will bring*, ver. 17. The ſword of the Lord that uſed to be drawn for Jeruſalem's defence, is now drawn for its deſtruction. Others are devoured by *evil beaſts*, which will make a prey of thoſe that fly for ſhelter to the deſerts and mountains; they ſhall meet their ruin where they expected refuge, for there is no outrunning the judgments of God, *ver.* 17. And laſtly, thoſe that eſcape ſhall be *ſcattered into* all parts of the world, *into all the winds*, ſo it is expreſſed, *ver.* 10, 12. intimating, that they ſhould not only be diſperſed, but hurried, and toſſed, and driven to and fro as *chaff before the wind*: Nay, and Cain's curſe, to be fugitives and vagabonds, is not the worſt of it neither, the reſtleſs life ſhall be cut off by a bloody death, *I will draw out a ſword after them*, which ſhall follow them wherever they go; *evil purſues ſinners*; and the curſe ſhall come upon them, and overtake them.

5. Theſe puniſhments will prove their ruin by degrees; they ſhall be *diminiſhed*, ver. 11. their ſtrength and glory ſhall grow leſs and leſs; they ſhall be *bereaved*, ver. 17. emptied of all that which was their joy and confidence; God ſends theſe judgments on purpoſe to deſtroy them, *ver.* 16. The arrows are not ſent (as thoſe which Jonathan ſhot) for their direction, but *for their deſtruction*, for God will *accompliſh his fury upon them*, ver. 13. the day of God's patience is over, and the ruin is remedileſs. Though this prophecy was to have its full accompliſhment now preſently in the deſtruction of Jeruſalem by the Chaldeans, yet the executioners not being named here, but the criminal only, *this is Jeruſalem*, we may well ſuppoſe that it looks further to the final deſtruction of that great city by the Romans, when God made a full end of the Jewiſh nation, and *cauſed his fury to reſt upon them.*

6. All this is ratified by the divine authority and veracity; *I the Lord have ſpoken it*, ver. 15. and again, *ver.* 17. the ſentence is paſſed by him that is Judge of heaven and earth, whoſe *judgment is according to truth*, and the judgments of his hand according to the judgments of his mouth: He hath *ſpoken it*, who can do it, for with him nothing is impoſſible: He hath *ſpoken it*, who will do it, for *he is not a man that he ſhould lie:* He hath *ſpoken it*, whom we are bound to hear and heed; whoſe *ipſe dixit* commands the moſt ſerious attention, and ſubmiſſive aſſent: *And they ſhall know that I the Lord have ſpoken it*, ver. 13. There were thoſe who thought it was only the prophet that ſpake it in his delirium, but God will make them know, by the accompliſhment of it, that he has ſpoken it in his zeal. Note, Sooner or later God's word will prove it ſelf.

CHAP. VI.

In this chapter we have, 1. *A threatning of the deſtruction of Iſrael for their idolatry, and the deſtruction of their idols with them,* ver. 1,—7. 2. *A promiſe of the gracious return of a remnant of them to God, by true repentance and reformation,* ver. 8,—10. 3. *Directions given to the prophet, and other the Lord's ſervants, to lament both the iniquities, and the calamities of Iſrael,* ver. 11,—14.

1. AND the word of the LORD came unto me, ſaying, 2. Son of man, ſet thy face towards the mountains of Iſrael, and propheſy againſt them, 3. And ſay, Ye mountains of Iſrael, hear the word of the LORD God, Thus ſaith the LORD God to the mountains and to the hills, to the rivers and to the vallies, Behold, I, *even* I will bring a ſword upon you, and I will deſtroy your high places. 4. And your altars ſhall be deſolate, and your images ſhall be broken; and I will caſt down your ſlain *men* before your idols. 5. And I will lay the dead carcaſes of the children of Iſrael before their idols, and I will ſcatter your bones round about your altars. 6. In all your dwelling-places the cities ſhall be laid waſte, and the high places ſhall be deſolate, that your altars may be laid waſte, and made deſolate, and your idols may be broken and ceaſe, and your images may be cut down, and your works may be aboliſhed. 7. And the ſlain ſhall fall in the midſt of you, and ye ſhall know that I *am* the LORD.

Here, 1. The prophecy is directed to *the mountains of Iſrael*, ver. 1, 2. the prophet muſt *ſet his face towards* them; if he could ſee ſo far off as the land of Iſrael, *the mountains* of that land would be firſt and furtheſt ſeen; towards them therefore he muſt look, and look boldly, and ſtedfaſtly, as the judge looks at the priſoner, and directs his ſpeech to him, when he paſſeth ſentence upon him. Though *the mountains of Iſrael* be never ſo high, and never ſo ſtrong, he muſt *ſet his face againſt* them, as having judgments to denounce that ſhould ſhake their foundation. *The mountains of Iſrael* had been *holy mountains*, but now they had polluted them with their high places, God ſets his face againſt them, and therefore the prophet muſt. Iſrael is here put, not, as ſometimes, for the ten tribes, but for the whole land. *The mountains* are called upon to *hear the word of the Lord*, to ſhame the inhabitants that would not hear. The prophets might as ſoon gain attention from *the mountains*, as from that *rebellious and gainſaying people*, to whom they all day long *ſtretched out their hands in vain. Hear, O mountains, the Lord's controverſy*, Mic. vi. 1, 2. for God's cauſe will have a hearing, whether we hear it or no: But from *the mountains the word of the Lord* echoes *to the hills, to the rivers, and to the vallies*; for to them alſo *the Lord God* ſpeaks; intimating, that the whole land is concerned in what is now to be delivered; and ſhall be witneſſes againſt this people that they had fair warning given them of the judgments coming, but they would not take it; nay, they contradicted the meſſage, and perſecuted the meſſengers, ſo that God's prophets might more ſafely and comfortably ſpeak to *the hills and mountains* than to them.

2. That which is threatned in this prophecy is the utter deſtruction of the idols, and the idolaters, and both by the ſword of war. God himſelf is commander in chief of this expedition againſt *the mountains of Iſrael*; it is he that ſaith, *Behold, I, even I will bring a ſword upon you*, ver. 3. the ſword of the Chaldeans is at God's command, goes where he ſends it, comes where he brings it, and lights as he directs it. In the deſolations of that war,

(1.) The idols, and all their appurtenances, ſhould be deſtroyed. The *high places*, which were on the tops of mountains, *ver.* 3. theſe ſhall

ſhall be levelled, *and made deſolate*, ver. 6. they ſhall not be beautified, ſhall not be frequented as they had been; the *altars*, on which they offered ſacrifice, and burnt incenſe to ſtrange gods, *ſhall be broken* to pieces, and *laid waſte*; the *images* and *idols* ſhall be defaced, *ſhall be broken and ceaſe*, and be cut down, and all the fine coſtly works about them ſhall be aboliſhed, *ver.* 4, 6. Obſerve here, 1. That war makes woful deſolations, which thoſe perſons, places and things, that were eſteemed moſt ſacred, cannot eſcape; for *the ſword devours one as well as another*. 2. That God ſometimes ruins idolaters even by the hands of idolaters, for ſuch the Chaldeans themſelves were; but, as if the deity were a local thing, the greateſt admirers of the gods of their own country, were the greateſt deſpiſers of the gods of other countries. 3. It is juſt with God to make that a deſolation, which we make an idol of; for he is a jealous God, and will not bear a rival. 4. If men do not, as they ought, deſtroy idolatry, God will, firſt or laſt, find out a way to do it. When Joſiah had deſtroyed the high places, altars and images, with the ſword of juſtice, they ſet them up again, but God will now deſtroy them with the ſword of war, and let us ſee who dares re-eſtabliſh them.

(2.) The worſhippers of idols, and all their adherents, ſhould be deſtroyed likewiſe. As *all their high places ſhall be laid waſte*, ſo ſhall all *their dwelling-places* too, even *all their cities*, ver. 6. They that profane God's dwelling-place, as they had done, can expect no other but that he ſhould abandon theirs, *chap.* v. 11. *If any man defile the temple of God, him will God deſtroy*, 1 Cor. iii. 17. It is here threatned, that *their ſlain ſhall fall in the midſt of them*, ver. 7. there ſhall be abundance ſlain, even in thoſe places which were thought moſt ſafe; but it is added, as a remarkable circumſtance, that they ſhall fall *before their idols*, ver. 4. that their *dead carcaſes* ſhould be *laid*, and their *bones ſcattered about their altars*, ver. 5. 1. Thus their idols ſhould be polluted, and thoſe places profaned, by the dead bodies, which they had had in veneration. If they will not *defile the covering of their graven images*, God will, *Iſa.* xxx. 22. The throwing of the carcaſes among them, as upon the dunghil, intimates, that they were but dunghil deities. 2. Thus it was intimated, that they were but dead things, unfit to be rivals with *the living God*; for the carcaſes of dead men, that, like them, *have eyes and ſee not, ears and hear not*, were the fitteſt company for them. 3. Thus the idols were upbraided with their inability to help their worſhippers, and idolaters upbraided with the folly of truſting in them; for it ſhould ſeem they fell by the ſword of the enemy then, when they were actually before their idols, imploring their aid, and putting themſelves under their protection: Sennacherib was ſlain by his ſons then when he was *worſhipping in the houſe of his god*. 4. The ſin might be read in this circumſtance of the puniſhment; the *ſlain men* are *caſt before the idols*, to ſhew that therefore they are ſlain, becauſe they worſhipped thoſe idols: See *Jer.* viii. 2. Let the ſurvivors obſerve it, and take warning, not to worſhip images: Let them ſee it, and know that *God is the Lord*, i. e. that *the Lord he is God*, and he alone.

8. ¶ Yet will I leave a remnant, that ye may have *ſome* that ſhall eſcape the ſword among the nations, when ye ſhall be ſcattered through the countries. 9. And they that eſcape of you ſhall remember me among the nations, whither they ſhall be carried captives, becauſe I am broken with their whoriſh heart which hath departed from me, and with their eyes which go a whoring after their idols: and they ſhall lothe themſelves for the evils which they have committed in all their abominations. 10. And they ſhall know that I *am* the LORD, *and that* I have not ſaid in vain that I would do this evil unto them.

Judgment had hitherto triumphed, but in theſe verſes mercy rejoiceth againſt judgment; a ſad end is made of this provoking people, but not a full end: The ruin ſeems to be univerſal, and *yet will I leave a remnant*, a little remnant, diſtinguiſhed from the body of the people, a few of many; ſuch as are left when the reſt periſh; and it is God that leaves them. This intimates, that they deſerved to have been cut off with the reſt, and had been cut off, if God had not left them. See *Iſa.* i. 9. And it is God, who by his grace works that in them which he has an eye to in ſparing them. Now,

(1.) It is a preſerved *remnant*, ſaved from the ruin which the body of the nation is involved in, *ver.* 8. *that ye may have ſome that ſhall eſcape the ſword.* God ſaid, *chap.* v. 12. that he would *draw a ſword after them* that were *ſcattered*, that deſtruction ſhould purſue them in their diſperſions; but here is *mercy remembred in the midſt of* that *wrath*, and a promiſe that ſome of *the Jews of the diſperſion*, as they were afterwards called, ſhould *eſcape the ſword.* None of thoſe that were to *fall by the ſword about* Jeruſalem *ſhall eſcape*, for they truſted to Jeruſalem's walls for ſecurity, and ſhall be made aſhamed of that vain confidence; but ſome of them *ſhall eſcape the ſword among the nations*, where, being deprived of all other ſtays, they ſtay themſelves upon God only. They are ſaid to *have* thoſe *that do eſcape*, for they ſhall be the ſeed of another generation, out of which Jeruſalem ſhall flouriſh again.

(2.) It is a penitent *remnant*, ver. 9. *They that eſcape of you ſhall remember me.* Note, To thoſe whom God deſigns for life, he will give *repentance unto life*: They are reprieved, and *eſcape the ſword*, that they may have time to return to God. Note, God's patience both leaves room for repentance, and is an encouragement to ſinners to repent. Where God deſigns grace to repent, he allows ſpace to repent, yet many that have the ſpace, want the grace, many that *eſcape the ſword*, do not forſake the ſin, as it is promiſed theſe here ſhall do. This *remnant* here marked for ſalvation, is a type of the *remnant* reſerved out of the body of mankind, to be monuments of mercy, which are made ſafe in the ſame way that theſe were, by being brought to repentance. Now obſerve here,

1. The occaſion of their repentance, and that is a mixture of judgment and mercy; judgment, that they were *carried captives*; but mercy, that they *eſcaped the ſword* in the land of their captivity; they were driven out of their own land, but not out of the land of the living; *not chaſed out of the world*, as others were, and they deſerved to be. Note, The conſideration of the juſt rebukes of providence we are under, and yet of the mercy mixed with them, ſhould engage us to repent, that we may anſwer God's end in both. And true repentance ſhall be accepted of God, though we are brought to it by our troubles; nay, ſanctified afflictions often prove means of converſion, as to Manaſſeh.

2. The root and principle of their repentance: *They ſhall remember me among the nations.* They *that forget God* in the land of their peace and proſperity, *waxed fat, and kicked*, were brought to *remember* him in the land of their captivity. The prodigal ſon never bethought himſelf of his father's houſe till he was ready to *periſh for hunger in the far country.* Their remembring God was the firſt ſtep they took in returning to him. Note, Then there begins to be ſome hopes of ſinners, when they begin to think of him whom they have ſinned againſt, and to inquire, *Where is God my Maker?* Sin takes riſe in forgetting God, *Jer.* iii. 21. Repentance takes riſe from the remembrance of him, and of our obligations to him. God ſaith, *They ſhall remember me*, i. e. I will give them grace to do ſo; for otherwiſe they would for ever forget him: That grace ſhall find them out wherever they are, and, by bringing God to their mind, ſhall bring them to their right mind. The prodigal, when he remembred his father, remembred how he had *ſinned againſt heaven, and before* him, ſo do theſe penitents.

(1.) They remember the baſe affront they had put upon God by their idolatries, and this is that which an ingenuous repentance faſtens upon, and moſt ſadly laments. They had departed from God to idols, had given that honour to pretended deities, the creatures of mens fancies, and the work of mens hands, which they ſhould have given to the God of Iſrael. They *departed from* God, from his word, which they ſhould have made their rule; from his work, which they ſhould have made their buſineſs; *their hearts departed from* him. The *heart*, which he requires and inſiſts upon, and without which *bodily exerciſe profits nothing*; the *heart*, which ſhould be ſet upon him, and carried out towards him, when that *departs from* him, it is as the treacherous elopement of a wife from her huſband, or the rebellious revolt of a ſubject from his ſovereign. *Their eyes* alſo *go after their idols*, they doted on them, and had great expectations from them. Their *hearts* followed *their eyes* in the choice of their gods, they muſt have gods that they could ſee, and then *their eyes* followed *their hearts* in the adoration of them. Now the malignity of this ſin is, that it is ſpiritual whoredom; it is a *whoriſh heart* that *departs from* God; and they are *eyes* that *go a whoring after their idols.* Note, Idolatry is ſpiritual whoredom; it is the breach of a marriage covenant with God; it is the ſetting of the affections upon that which is a rival with, and the indulgence of a baſe luſt which deceives and defiles the ſoul, and is a great wrong to God in his honour.

(2.) They remember what a grief this was to him, and how he reſented it. They ſhall remember *that I am broken with their whoriſh heart, and their eyes* that are full of this ſpiritual adultery; not only angry at it, but grieved, as a husband is at the lewdneſs of a wife whom he dearly loved, grieved to that degree that he is broken with it; it breaks his heart to think that he ſhould be ſo diſingenuouſly dealt with; he is broken as an aged father is with the undutiful carriage of a rebellious and diſobedient ſon, which ſinks his ſpirits, and makes him to ſtoop. *Forty years long was I grieved with this generation*, Pſalm xcv. 10. *God's meaſures were broken*, ſo ſome; a ſtop was put to the current of his favours towards them, and he was even compelled to puniſh them. This they ſhall remember in the day of their repentance, and it ſhall affect and humble them more than any thing; not ſo much that their peace was broken, and their country broken, as *that God was broken* by their ſin. Thus *they ſhall look on him whom they have pierced, and ſhall mourn*, Zech. xii. 10. Note, Nothing grieves a true penitent ſo much, as to think that his ſin hath been a grief to God, and to the Spirit of his grace.

3. The product and evidence of their repentance: *They ſhall lothe themſelves for the evils which they have committed in all their abominations.* Thus God will give them grace to qualify them for pardon and deliverance. Though he had been *broken by their whoriſh heart*, yet he would not quite caſt them off: See *Iſa.* lvii. 17, 18. *Hoſ.* ii. 13, 14. His goodneſs takes occaſion from their badneſs to appear

appear the more illuſtrious. Note, 1. True penitents ſee ſin to be an abominable thing, that *abominable thing which the Lord hates*, and which makes ſinners, and even their ſervices odious to him, *Jer.* xliv. 4. *Iſa.* i. 11. It defiles the ſinner's own conſcience, and makes him, unleſs he be paſt feeling, an abomination to himſelf. An idol is particularly called *an abomination*, Iſa. xliv. 19. Thoſe gratifications which the hearts of ſinners were ſet upon as delectable things, the hearts of penitents are turned againſt as deteſtable things. 2. There are many *evils committed in theſe abominations*, many included in them, attendant on them, and flowing from them; many tranſgreſſions in one ſin, *Lev.* xvi. 21. In their idolatries they were ſometimes guilty of whoredom, as in the worſhip of Peor; ſometimes of murther, as in the worſhip of Moloch; theſe were *evils committed in their abominations*. Or, it notes the great malignity there is in ſin; it is an abomination that has abundance of evil in it. 3. Thoſe that truly lothe ſin, cannot but lothe themſelves becauſe of ſin; ſelf-lothing is evermore the companion of true repentance. Penitents quarrel with themſelves, and can never be reconciled to themſelves, till they have ſome ground to hope that God is reconciled to them; nay, then they ſhall lie down in their ſhame, when he is pacified towards them, *Ezek.* xvi. 1.

4. The glory that will redound to God by their repentance, *ver.* 10. *They ſhall know that I am the Lord*, i. e. they ſhall be convinced of it by experience, and ſhall be ready to own it, *and that I have not ſaid in vain that I would do this evil unto them*, finding that what I have ſaid is made good, and made to work for good, and to anſwer a good intention; and that it was not without juſt provocation, that they were thus threatned, and thus puniſhed. Note, 1. One way or other God will make ſinners to know and own that he is *the Lord*, either by their repentance, or by their ruin. 2. All true penitents are brought to acknowledge both the equity and the efficacy of the word of God, particularly the threatnings of the word, and to juſtify God in them, and in the accompliſhment of them.

11. ¶ Thus ſaith the LORD God, Smite with thine hand, and ſtamp with thy foot, and ſay, Alas, for all the evil abominations of the houſe of Iſrael: for they ſhall fall by the ſword, by the famine, and by the peſtilence. 12. He that is far off ſhall die of the peſtilence, and he that is near ſhall fall by the ſword, and he that remaineth and is beſieged ſhall die by the famine: thus will I accompliſh my fury upon them. 13. Then ſhall ye know that I *am* the LORD, when their ſlain *men* ſhall be among their idols round about their altars, upon every high hill in all the tops of the mountains, and under every green tree, and under every thick oak, the place where they did offer ſweet ſavour to all their idols. 14. So will I ſtretch out my hand upon them, and make the land deſolate; yea, more deſolate than the wilderneſs *towards* Diblath, in all their habitations, and they ſhall know that I *am* the LORD.

The ſame threatnings which we had before in the foregoing chapter, and in the former part of this, are here repeated, with a direction to the prophet to lament them, that thoſe he propheſied to might be the more affected with the foreſight of them.

1. He muſt by his geſtures in preaching expreſs the deep ſenſe he had both of the iniquities and of the calamities of the houſe of Iſrael, *ver.* 11. *Smite with thy hand, and ſtamp with thy foot*; thus he muſt make it to appear that he was in earneſt in what he ſaid to them, that he firmly believed it, and laid it to heart; thus he muſt ſignify the juſt diſpleaſure he had conceived at their ſins, and the juſt dread he was under of the judgments coming upon them. Some would reject this uſe of theſe geſtures, and call them antick and ridiculous; but God bids him uſe them becauſe they might help to enforce the word upon ſome, and give it the ſetting on; and thoſe that know the worth of ſouls, will be content to be laughed at by the wits, ſo they may but edify the weak. Two things the prophet muſt thus lament. 1. National ſins. *Alas, for all the evil abominations of the houſe of Iſrael.* Note, The ſins of ſinners are the ſorrows of God's faithful ſervants, eſpecially *the evil abominations of the houſe of Iſrael*, whoſe ſins are more abominable, and have more evil in them than the ſins of others. Alas! *what will be in the end hereof?* 2. National judgments. To puniſh them for theſe abominations, *they ſhall fall by the ſword, by the famine, and by the peſtilence.* Note, It is our duty to be affected not only with our own ſins and ſufferings, but with the ſins and ſufferings of others; and to look with compaſſion upon the miſeries that wicked people bring upon themſelves; as Chriſt *beheld Jeruſalem, and wept over it.*

2. He muſt inculcate what he had ſaid before concerning the deſtruction that was coming upon them.

(1.) They ſhall be run down and ruined by a variety of judgments, which ſhall find them out, and follow them wherever they are, *ver.* 12. *He that is far off*, and thinks himſelf out of danger, becauſe out of the reach of the Chaldeans arrows, yet ſhall find himſelf not out of the reach of God's arrows, which fly day and night, *Pſalm* xci. 5. *he ſhall die of the peſtilence*; *he that is near* a place of ſtrength, which he hopes will be to him a place of ſafety, yet *ſhall fall by the ſword*, before he can retreat; *he that* is ſo cautious, as not to venture out, but *remains* in the city, there he *ſhall die by the famine*, the ſaddeſt death of all: *Thus will* God *accompliſh his fury*, i. e. do all that againſt them which he had purpoſed to do.

(2.) They ſhall read their ſin in their puniſhment; for *their ſlain men ſhall be among their idols, round about their altars*, as was threatned before, *ver.* 5, 6, 7. There, where they had proſtrated themſelves in honour of their idols, God will lay them dead to their own reproach, and the reproach of their idols: They lived among them, and ſhall die among them: They had offered ſweet odours to their idols, but there ſhall their dead carcaſes ſend forth a ſtinking ſmell, as it were to atone for that miſplaced incenſe.

(3.) The country ſhall be all laid waſte, as before *the cities*, ver. 6. *I will make the land deſolate.* That fruitful, pleaſant, populous country, that has been as the garden of the Lord, the glory of all lands, ſhall be *deſolate, more deſolate than the wilderneſs towards Diblath*, ver. 14. Diblathaim it is called, *Numb.* xxxiii. 46. *Jer.* xlviii. 22. that *great and terrible wilderneſs* which is deſcribed, *Deut.* viii. 15. wherein were *fiery ſerpents and ſcorpions.* The land of Canaan is at this day one of the moſt barren, deſolate countries in the world. City and country are thus depopulated *that the altars may be laid waſte, and made deſolate*, ver. 6. Rather than their idolatrous altars ſhall be left ſtanding, both town and country ſhall be laid in ruins. Sin is a deſolating thing, therefore *ſtand in awe, and ſin not.*

CHAP. VII.

In this chapter the approaching ruin of the land of Iſrael is moſt particularly foretold, in affecting expreſſions, often repeated, that, if poſſible, they might be awakened, by repentance, to prevent it. The prophet muſt tell them, 1. *That it will be a final ruin, a compleat utter deſtruction, which would make an end of them, a miſerable end*, ver. 1,—6. 2. *That it is an approaching ruin, juſt at the door*, ver. 7,—10. 3. *That it is an unavoidable ruin, becauſe they had, by ſin, brought it upon themſelves*, ver. 10,—15. 4. *That their ſtrength and wealth ſhould be no fence againſt it*, ver. 16,—19. 5. *That the temple, which they truſted in, ſhould it ſelf be ruined*, ver. 20,—22. 6. *That it ſhould be an univerſal ruin, the ſin that brought it having been univerſal*, ver. 23,—27.

1. MOreover the word of the LORD came unto me, ſaying, 2. Alſo thou ſon of man, thus ſaith the LORD God unto the land of Iſrael, An end, the end is come upon the four corners of the land. 3. Now *is* the end *come* upon thee, and I will ſend mine anger upon thee, and will judge thee according to thy ways, and will recompenſe upon thee all thine abominations. 4. And mine eye ſhall not ſpare thee, neither will I have pity: but I will recompenſe thy ways upon thee, and thine abominations ſhall be in the midſt of thee, and ye ſhall know that I *am* the LORD. 5. Thus ſaith the LORD God, An evil, an only evil, behold, is come. 6. An end is come, the end is come; it watcheth for thee, behold, it is come. 7. The morning is come upon thee, O thou that dwelleſt in the land: the time is come, the day of trouble *is* near, and not the ſounding again of the mountains. 8. Now will I ſhortly pour out my fury upon thee, and accompliſh mine anger upon thee: and I will judge thee according to thy ways, and will recompenſe thee for all thine abominations. 9. And mine eye ſhall not ſpare, neither will I have pity: I will recompenſe thee according to thy ways, and thine abominations *that* are in the midſt of thee, and ye ſhall know that I *am* the LORD that ſmiteth. 10. Behold the day, behold, it is come, the morning is gone forth; the rod hath bloſſomed, pride hath budded. 11. Violence is riſen up into a rod of wickedneſs: none of them *ſhall remain*, nor of their multitude, nor of any of theirs, neither *ſhall there be* wailing for them. 12. The time is come, the day draweth near, let not the buyer rejoice, nor the ſeller mourn: for wrath *is* upon all the multitude thereof. 13. For the ſeller ſhall not return to that which is ſold, although they were yet alive: for the viſion *is* touching the whole multitude thereof, *which* ſhall not return: neither ſhall any ſtrengthen himſelf in the iniquity of his life. 14. They have blown the trumpet, even to make all ready, but none goeth to the battle: for my wrath *is* upon all

the multitude thereof. 15. The ſword *is* without, and the peſtilence and the famine within: he that *is* in the field ſhall die with the ſword; and he that *is* in the city, famine and peſtilence ſhall devour him.

We have here fair warning given of the deſtruction of the land of Iſrael, which was now haſtening on apace: God, by the prophet, not only ſends notice of it, but will have it inculcated in the ſame expreſſions, to ſhew that the thing is certain, that it is near, that the prophet is himſelf affected with it, and deſires they ſhould be ſo too, but finds them deaf, and ſtupid, and unaffected. When the town is on fire, men do not ſeek for fine words, and quaint expreſſions, in which to give an account of it, but cry about the ſtreets, with a loud and lamentable voice, Fire, fire; ſo the prophet here proclaims, *An end, an end, it is come, it is come, behold, it is come: He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

1. *An end is come, the end is come*, ver. 2. and again, *ver.* 6. and, *ver.* 3. *Now is the end come upon thee; the end*, which all their wickedneſs had a tendency to, and which God has often told them it would come to at laſt, when, by his prophets, he had asked them, *What will ye do in the end hereof? the end*, which all the foregoing judgments had been working towards, as means to bring it about, their ruin ſhall now be compleated; or, *the end*, that is the period of their ſtate, the final deſtruction of their nation; as the deluge was *the end of all fleſh*, Gen. vi. 13. They had flattered themſelves with hopes that they ſhould ſhortly *ſee an end* of their troubles; yea, ſaith God, *An end is come*, but a miſerable one, not *the expected end*, which is promiſed to the pious remnant among them, *Jer.* xxix. 11. It *is the end, that end*, which you have been ſo often warned of; *that laſt end*, which Moſes wiſhed you to *conſider*, Deut. xxxii. 29. and which, becauſe *Jeruſalem remembred not, therefore ſhe came down wonderfully*, Lam. i. 9. This end was long in coming, but *now it is come:* Though the ruin of ſinners comes ſlowly, it comes ſurely: *It is come*, it watcheth for thee, ready to receive thee. This, perhaps, looks further to the laſt deſtruction of that nation by the Romans, which that by the Chaldeans was an earneſt of; and ſtill further, to the final deſtruction of the world of the ungodly: *The end of all things is at hand*; and Jeruſalem's laſt end was a type of *the end of the world*, Matt. xxiv. 3. O that we could all ſee that end of time and days very near, and the end of our own time and days much nearer, that we may ſecure a happy lot *in the end of the days!* Dan. xii. *ult.* This *end comes upon the four corners of the land*; the ruin, as it ſhall be final, ſo it ſhall be total; no part of the land ſhall eſcape, no, not that which lies moſt remote; ſuch will the deſtruction of the world be; all theſe things ſhall be diſſolved; ſuch will the deſtruction of ſinners be; none can avoid it. *O that the wickedneſs of the wicked* might *come to an end*, before it bring them to *an end!*

2. *An evil, an only evil, behold, is come*, ver. 5. Sin is *an evil, an only evil, an evil* that has no good in it; it is the worſt of *evils*; but this is ſpoken of the *evil of trouble*; it is *an evil*, one *evil*, and that one ſhall ſuffice to effect and compleat the ruin of the nation, there needs no more to do its buſineſs; this one ſhall *make an utter end*, affliction needs not *riſe up a ſecond time*, Nah. i. 9. It is *an evil* without precedent or parallel, *an evil* that ſtands alone, you cannot produce ſuch another inſtance: It is to the impenitent *an evil, an only evil*, it hardens their hearts, and irritates their corruptions; whereas there were thoſe to whom it was ſanctified by the grace of God, and made a means of much good; they were *ſent into Babylon for their good*, Jer. xxiv. 5. The wicked have *the dregs of that cup* to drink, which, to the righteous, is full of *mixtures of mercy*, Pſalm lxxv. 8. The ſame affliction is to us either a half *evil*, or *an only evil*, according as we carry our ſelves under it, and make uſe of it: But when *an end, the end is come* upon the wicked world, then *an evil, an only evil* comes upon it, and not till then. The foreſt of temporal judgments have their allays, but the torments of the damned are *an evil, an only evil.*

3. *The time is come*, the ſet time for the inflicting of this *only evil*, and the making of this *full end*; for to all God's purpoſes *there is a time*, a proper time, and that prefixed, in which the purpoſe ſhall have its accompliſhment; particularly the time of reckoning with wicked people, and rendering to them according to their deſerts, is fixed; *the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God*; and *he ſees*, whether we ſee it or no, that *his day is coming*. This they are here told of again and again, *ver.* 10. *Behold, the day*, that has lingered ſo long, *is come* at laſt, *behold, it is come: The time is come, the day draws near, the day of trouble is near*, ver. 7, 12. Though threatned judgments may be long deferred, yet they ſhall not be dropped, the time for executing them will come. Though God's patience may put them off, nothing but man's ſincere repentance and reformation will put them by. *The morning is come upon thee*, ver. 7. and again, *ver.* 10. *The morning is gone forth*; the day of trouble dawns, the day of deſtruction is already begun. *The morning* diſcovers that which was hidden; they thought their ſecret ſins ſhould never come to light, but now they will be brought to light. They uſed to try and execute malefactors in *the morning*, and ſuch a morning of judgment and execution is now coming upon them, *a day of trouble* to ſinners, *the year of their viſitation.* See how ſtupid theſe people were, that though the day of their deſtruction was already begun, yet they were not aware of it, but muſt be thus told of it again and again! *The day of trouble*, real trouble, *is near, and not the ſounding again of the mountains*, i. e. not a meer echo, or report of troubles, as they were willing to think it was, nothing but a groundleſs ſurmiſe; as if the *men that came againſt them* were but *the ſhadow of the mountains*, as Zebul ſuggeſted to Gaal, *Judg.* ix. 36. and the intelligence they received were but *an empty ſound*, reverberated from *the mountains.* No, the trouble is not a fancy, and ſo you will ſoon find.

4. All this comes from God's wrath, not allayed, as ſometimes it has been, with mixtures of mercy: This is the fountain from which all theſe calamities flow; and this is *the wormwood and the gall*, in *the affliction and the miſery*, which makes it bitter indeed. *ver.* 3. *I will ſend mine anger upon thee.* Obſerve, God is Lord of his anger; it doth not break out but when he pleaſeth, nor faſten upon any, but as he directs it, and gives it commiſſion. The expreſſion riſeth higher, *ver.* 8. *Now will I ſhortly pour out my fury upon thee* in full vials, *and accompliſh mine anger*, all the purpoſes and all the products of it, *upon thee.* This wrath doth not ſingle out here and there one to be made examples, but it *is upon all the multitude thereof*, ver. 12, 14. the whole body of the nation is become a *veſſel of wrath, fitted for deſtruction.* God doth ſometimes *in wrath remember mercy*, but now he ſaith, *Mine eye ſhall not ſpare thee, neither will I have pity*, ver. 4. and again, *ver.* 9. they ſhall *have judgment without mercy*, that made light of mercy when it was offered them.

5. All this is the juſt puniſhment of their ſins, and it is what they have by their own folly brought upon themſelves. This is much inſiſted on here, that they might be brought to juſtify God in all he had brought upon them. God never ſends his anger but in wiſdom and juſtice, and therefore it follows, *I will judge thee according to thy ways*, ver. 3. I will examine what thy ways have been, compare them with the law, and then deal with thee according to the merit of them, and *recompenſe* them to *thee*, ver. 4. Note, In the heavieſt judgments God inflicts upon ſinners, he doth but *recompenſe their own ways upon them*; they are beaten with their own rod. And when God comes to reckon with a ſinful people, he will bring every provocation to account; *I will recompenſe upon thee all thine abominations*, ver. 3. and now *thine iniquity ſhall be found to be hateful*, Pſalm xxxvi. 2. *and thine abominations ſhall be in the midſt of thee*, ver. 4. *i. e.* the ſecret wickedneſs ſhall now be brought to light, and that ſhall appear to have been in the midſt of thee, which before was not ſuſpected; and thy ſin ſhall now become an *abomination* to thy ſelf; ſo the *abomination* of iniquity will be, when it comes to be an *abomination of deſolation*, Matt. xxiv. 15. Or, *thine abominations*, i. e. the puniſhments of them, *ſhall be in the midſt of thee*, i. e. they ſhall *reach to thy heart:* See *Jer.* iv. 18. Or, therefore God *will not ſpare, nor have pity*, becauſe even then when he is *recompenſing their ways* upon them, yet *in their diſtreſs they treſpaſs yet more*; their *abominations* are ſtill *in the midſt of them*, indulged and harboured in their hearts. It is repeated again, *ver.* 8, 9. *I will judge thee, I will recompenſe thee.*

Two ſins are particularly inſtanced in as provoking God to bring theſe judgments upon them, pride and oppreſſion. 1. God will humble them by his judgments, for they have magnified themſelves: *The rod* of affliction *hath bloſſomed*, but it was *pride* that *budded*, ver. 10. What buds in ſin, will bloſſom in ſome judgment or other: The pride of Judah and Jeruſalem appeared, among all orders and degrees of men, as buds upon the tree in ſpring. 2. Their enemies ſhall deal hardly with them, for they have dealt hardly with one another, *ver.* 11. *Violence is riſen up into a rod of wickedneſs*, i. e. their injurioufneſs to one another is protected and patronized by the power of the magiſtrate. The rod of government was become a *rod of wickedneſs*; to ſuch a degree of impudence was *violence riſen up: I ſaw the place of judgment that wickedneſs was there*, Eccl. iii. 16. Iſa. v. 7. Whatever are the fruits of God's judgments, it is certain our ſin is the root of them.

6. There is no eſcape from theſe judgments, nor fence againſt them, for they ſhall be univerſal, and ſhall bear down all before them, without remedy.

(1.) Death, in its various ſhapes, ſhall ride triumphantly, both in town and country, both within the city, and without it, *ver.* 15. Men ſhall be ſafe no where, for *he that is in the field ſhall die by the ſword*, every field ſhall be to them a field of battle; *and he that is in the city*, though it be a holy city, yet it ſhall not be his protection, but *famine and peſtilence ſhall devour him:* Sin had abounded both in city and country, *Iliacos intra muros peccatur & extra*, and therefore in both deſolations are made.

(2.) None of thoſe that are marked for death ſhall eſcape; there *ſhall none of them remain*; none of thoſe proud oppreſſors that did violence to their poor neighbours with *the rod of wickedneſs*, none of them ſhall be left, but they ſhall be all ſwept away by the deſolation that is coming, *ver.* 11. *None of their multitude*, i. e. of the rabble, whom they ſet on to do miſchief, and to countenance them in doing it; to cry, Crucify, crucify ſuch as they were reſolved to run down; *none of them ſhall remain, nor none of theirs*; their families ſhall all be deſtroyed, and neither root nor branch left them; this *multitude*, this mob, divine vengeance will in a particular manner faſten upon; *for wrath is upon all the multitude thereof*, ver. 12, 14. and *the viſion was touching the whole multitude thereof*,

thereof, ver. 13. the bulk of the common people; the judgments coming ſhall carry them away by wholeſale, and they ſhall neither ſecure themſelves, nor their maſters, whoſe creatures and tools they were: God's judgments, when they come with commiſſion, cannot be overpowered by multitudes. *Though hand join in hand, yet ſhall not the wicked go unpuniſhed.*

(3.) Thoſe that fall ſhall not be lamented, *ver.* 11. *there ſhall be no wailing for them*, for there ſhall be none left to bewail them, but ſuch as are haſtening apace after them: And the times ſhall be ſo bad, that men ſhall rather congratulate than condole the death of their friends, as reckoning thoſe happy that are taken away from ſeeing theſe deſolations, and ſharing in them, *Jer.* xvi. 4, 5.

(4.) They ſhall not be able to make any reſiſtance. The decree is gone forth, and *the viſion* concerning them *ſhall not return*, ver. 13. God will not recall it, and they cannot defeat it; and therefore it *ſhall not return*, re infecta, but ſhall *accompliſh that for which he ſends it.* God's word will take place, and then, 1. Particular perſons cannot make their part good againſt God; no man *ſhall ſtrengthen himſelf in the iniquity of his life*, i. e. it will be to no purpoſe for ſinners to ſet God and his judgments at defiance as they uſed to do; *none ever hardened his heart againſt God and proſpered:* Thoſe that ſtrengthen themſelves in their wickedneſs, will be found not only to weaken, but to ruin themſelves, *Pſalm* lii. 7. 2. *The multitude* cannot reſiſt the torrent of theſe judgments, nor make head againſt them, *ver.* 14. *They have blown the trumpet*, to call their ſoldiers together, and to animate and encourage thoſe whom they have got together; and thus they think *to make all ready*, but all in vain, none liſt themſelves, and thoſe that do, have not courage to face the enemy. Note, If God be againſt us, none can be for us, to do us any ſervice.

(5.) They ſhall have no hope of the return of their proſperity, with which to ſupport themſelves in their adverſity; they ſhall have given up all for gone; and therefore, *let not the buyer rejoice*, that he is increaſing his eſtate, and is become a purchaſer; neither let *the ſeller mourn*, that he is leſſening his eſtate, and is become a bankrupt, *ver.* 11. See the vanity of the things of this world, and how worthleſs they are! that in a time of trouble when we have moſt need of them, we may, perhaps, make leaſt account of them: They that have ſold are the more eaſy, having the leſs to loſe; and they that have bought have but increaſed their own cares and fears: Becauſe *the faſhion of this world paſſeth away*, let *thoſe that buy be as though they poſſeſſed not*, becauſe they know not how ſoon they may be diſpoſſeſſed, 1 *Cor.* vii. 29. It is added, *ver.* 12. *The ſeller ſhall not return*, at the year of jubilee, *to that which is ſold*, according to the law, though he ſhould eſcape the ſword and peſtilence, and live till that year comes; for no inheritances ſhall be enjoyed here, till the ſeventy years be accompliſhed, and then men ſhall return to their poſſeſſions, ſhall claim and have their own again, in the belief of which, Jeremiah, about this time, *bought his uncle's field*, yet, according to the charge, the buyer did not rejoice, but complain, *Jer.* xxxii. 25.

Laſtly, God will be glorified in all: *Ye ſhall know that I am the Lord*, vet. 4. *that I am the Lord that ſmiteth*, ver. 9. You look at ſecond cauſes, and think it is Nebuchadnezzar that ſmites you, but you ſhall be made to know he is but the ſtaff, it is the hand of the Lord that ſmiteth you; and who knows the weight of his hand? Thoſe who would not know it was the *Lord that did them good*, ſhall be made to know it is *the Lord that ſmiteth* them; for one way or other he will be owned.

16. ¶ But they that eſcape of them, ſhall eſcape, and ſhall be on the mountains like doves of the vallies, all of them mourning, every one for his iniquity. 17. All hands ſhall be feeble, and all knees ſhall be weak *as* water. 18. They ſhall alſo gird *themſelves* with ſackcloth, and horror ſhall cover them, and ſhame *ſhall be* upon all faces, and baldneſs upon all their heads. 19. They ſhall caſt their ſilver in the ſtreets, and their gold ſhall be removed: their ſilver and their gold ſhall not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the LORD: they ſhall not ſatisfy their ſouls, neither fill their bowels: becauſe it is the ſtumbling-block of their iniquity. 20. ¶ As for the beauty of his ornament, he ſet it in majeſty: but they made the images of their abominations, *and* of their deteſtable things therein: therefore have I ſet it far from them. 21. And I will give it into the hands of the ſtrangers for a prey, and to the wicked of the earth for a ſpoil, and they ſhall pollute it. 22. My face will I turn alſo from them, and they ſhall pollute my ſecret *place:* for the robbers ſhall enter into it and defile it.

We have attended the fate of thoſe that are cut off, and are now to attend the flight of thoſe that have an opportunity of outrunning the danger; ſome of them *ſhall eſcape*, ver. 16. but what the better? as good die once, as in a miſerable life die a thouſand deaths, and eſcape only like Cain, to be *fugitives and vagabonds*, and afraid of being ſlain by every one they meet; ſo ſhall theſe here be.

1. They ſhall have no comfort or ſatisfaction in their own minds, but be in continual anguiſh and terror, for wherever they go, they carry about with them guilty conſciences, which make them a burthen to themſelves.

(1.) They ſhall be always ſolitary, and under prevailing melancholy; they ſhall not be in the cities or places of concourſe, but all alone *upon the mountains*, not caring for ſociety, but ſhy of it, as being aſhamed of the low circumſtances to which they are reduced.

(2.) They ſhall be always ſorrowful: Thoſe have reaſon to be ſo that are under the tokens of God's diſpleaſure, and God can make thoſe ſo, that have been moſt jovial and ſet ſorrow at defiance.. They that, when time was, thought themſelves as the lions of the mountains, ſo daring were they, now become as the *doves of the vallies*, ſo ſneaking are they and ſo diſpirited, ready to *flee when none purſues*, and to tremble at the ſhaking of a leaf. They are all of them mourning, not with a *godly ſorrow*, but with the *ſorrow of the world*, which *worketh death, every one for his iniquity*, i. e. for thoſe calamities which they now ſee their iniquity has brought upon them; not only the iniquity of the land, but their own: they ſhall then be brought to acknowledge what they have each of them contributed to the national guilt. Note, Sooner or later ſin will have ſorrow of one kind or other, and thoſe that will not repent of their iniquity, may juſtly be left to pine away in it; that will not mourn for it as it is an offence to God, ſhall be made to mourn for it as it is a ſhame and ruin to themſelves; to *mourn at the laſt, when the fleſh and body are conſumed, and to ſay, How have I hated inſtruction!* Prov. v. 11.

(3.) They ſhall be deprived of all their ſtrength of body and mind, *ver.* 17. *All hands ſhall be feeble*, ſo that they ſhall not be able to fight, or defend themſelves, and *all knees ſhall be weak as water*, ſo that they ſhall not be able to flee, nor to ſtand their ground: they ſhall feel an univerſal colliquation, their knees *ſhall flow as water*, ſo that they muſt fall of courſe. Note, It is folly for the *ſtrong man to glory in his ſtrength*, for God can ſoon weaken it.

(4.) They ſhall be deprived of all their hopes, and ſhall abandon themſelves to deſpair, *ver.* 18. they ſhall have nothing to hold up their ſpirits with, their aſpects ſhall ſhew what are their proſpects, all dreadful, for they ſhall *gird themſelves with ſackcloth*, as having no expectation ever to wear better clothing, *horror ſhall cover them*, and *ſhame*, and *baldneſs*, all the expreſſions of a deſperate ſorrow, *Iſa.* xvii. 11. Note, Thoſe who will not be kept from ſin, by fear and ſhame, ſhall, by fear and ſhame, be puniſhed for it; ſuch is the confuſion that ſin will end in.

2. They ſhall have no benefit by their wealth and riches, but ſhall be perfectly ſick of them, *ver.* 19. They that were reduced to this diſtreſs were ſuch as had had abundance of *ſilver and gold*, money, and plate, and jewels, and other valuable goods; from which they promiſed themſelves a great deal of advantage in times of publick trouble; they thought it would be *their ſtrong city*, that with it they could bribe enemies and buy friends, that it would be the ranſom of their lives, and that they could never want bread as long as they had money, and that *money would anſwer all things*, but ſee how it proved; (1.) It had been a great temptation to them in the *day of their proſperity*; they ſet their affections upon it, and put their confidence in it; by their eager purſuit of it they were drawn into ſin, and by their plentiful enjoyment of it they were hardened in ſin: and thus it was the ſtumbling-block of their iniquity, it occaſioned their falling into ſin, and obſtructed their return to God. Note, There are many whoſe wealth is their ſnare and ruin; the gaining of the world is the loſing of their ſouls, it makes them proud, ſecure, covetous, oppreſſive, voluptuous, and that which, if well uſed, might have been the ſervant of their piety, being abuſed becomes *the ſtumbling-block of their iniquity.* (2.) It was no relief to them now in the day of their adverſity; for, 1. Their *gold and ſilver* could not protect them from the judgments of God, they *ſhall not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the Lord*, they ſhall not ſerve to atone his juſtice, or turn away his wrath, nor to ſcreen them from the judgments he is bringing upon them. Note, *Riches profit not in the day of wrath*, Prov. xi. 4. they neither ſet them ſo high as that God's judgments cannot reach them, nor make them ſo ſtrong as that they cannot conquer them. There is a day of wrath coming, when it will appear that mens wealth is utterly unable to deliver them or do them any ſervice. What the better was the rich man for his *full barns* when *his ſoul was required of him*; or that other rich man for his *purple, and ſcarlet, and ſumptuous fare*, when in hell he could not procure a drop of water to *cool his tongue?* Money is no defence againſt the arreſts of death, nor any alleviation to the miſeries of the damned. 2. Their *gold and ſilver* could not give them any content under their calamities. (1.) They could not fill their bowels; when there was no bread left in the city, none to be had for love or money, their ſilver and gold could not ſatisfy their hunger, nor ſerve to make one meal's meat for them. Note, We could better be without mines of gold, than fields of corn; the products of the earth which may eaſily be gathered from the ſurface of it, are much greater bleſſings to mankind than its

treaſures

treaſures, which are with ſo much difficulty and hazard digged out of its bowels. If God give us *daily bread* we have reaſon to be thankful, and no reaſon to complain, though *ſilver and gold* we have none. (2.) Much leſs could they ſatisfy their ſouls, or yield them any inward comfort. Note, The wealth of this world has not that in it which will anſwer the deſires of the ſoul, or be any ſatisfaction to it in a day of diſtreſs. *He that loveth ſilver ſhall not be ſatisfied with ſilver*, much leſs he that loſeth it. 3. Their *gold and ſilver ſhall be thrown into the ſtreets*, either by the hands of the enemy, who ſhall have more ſpoil than they care for, or can carry away; ſilver ſhall be nothing accounted of, they ſhall *caſt that in the ſtreets*; but the *gold*, which is more valuable, ſhall be removed and brought to Babylon; or, they themſelves ſhall *throw away their ſilver and gold*, either becauſe it would be an encumbrance to them and retard their flight, or becauſe it would expoſe them, and be a temptation to the enemy to cut their throats for their money; or, in indignation at it, becauſe they found that after all the care and pains they had taken to ſcrape it together and hoard it up they found it would ſtand them in no ſtead, but do them a miſchief rather. Note, *The world paſſeth away, and the luſt thereof*, 1 John ii. 17. The time may come when worldly men will be as weary of their wealth as now they are wedded to it, when thoſe fare beſt that have leaſt.

3. God's temple ſhall ſtand them in no ſtead, *ver.* 20, 21. 22. This they had prided themſelves in, and promiſed themſelves ſecurity from, *Jer.* vii. 4. *Mich.* iii. 11. but this confidence of theirs ſhall fail them. Obſerve, (1.) The great honour God had done to that people in ſetting up his ſanctuary among them, *ver.* 20. *As for the beauty of his ornament*, that *holy and beautiful houſe* where *they and their fathers praiſed God*, Iſa. lxiv. 11. which was therefore beautiful, becauſe holy. It was called the *beauty of holineſs*, and that is the beauty of its ornament; it was alſo adorned with gold and gifts; as for this, *he ſet it in majeſty*, every thing was contrived to make it magnificent, that it might help to make the people of Iſrael the more illuſtrious among their neighbours, *He built his ſanctuary like high palaces*, Pſal. lxxviii. 69. it was a *glorious high throne from the beginning*, Jer. xvii. 12. But, (2.) Here is the great diſhonour they had done to God in profaning his ſanctuary; they *made the images of their* counterfeit deities, which they ſet up in rivalſhip with God, and which are here called *their abominations* and *their deteſtable things*, for ſo they were to God, and ſo they ſhould have been to them, and theſe *they ſet up* in God's temple, than which a greater affront could not be put upon him. And therefore (3.) It is here threatned that they ſhall be deprived of the temple; and it ſhall be no ſuccour to them, *therefore have I ſet it far from them*, i. e. ſent them far from it, ſo that it is out of the reach of their ſervices, and they out of the reach of its influencess. Note, God's ordinances and the privileges of a profeſſion of religion will juſtly be taken away from thoſe that deſpiſe and profane them. Nay, they ſhall not only be kept at a diſtance from the temple, but the temple ſhall be involved in the common deſolation, *ver.* 21. the Chaldeans that are *ſtrangers*, and therefore have no veneration for it, that are *the wicked of the earth*, and therefore have an antipathy to it, ſhall *have it for a prey*, and for *a ſpoil*, all the ornaments and treaſures of it ſhall fall into their hands, who will make no difference between that and other plunder; this was a grief to the ſaints in Zion, who complained of nothing ſo much as of that which *the enemy did wickedly in the ſanctuary*, Pſal. lxxiv. 3. but it was the puniſhment of the ſinners in Zion, who by profaning the temple with *ſtrange gods* provoked God to ſuffer it to be profaned by *ſtrange nations*, and to *turn his face from them that did it*, as if he had not ſeen them and their crimes; and from them that deprecated it, as not regarding them and their prayers. Let the ſoldiers do as they will, let them *enter into the ſecret place*, into the holy of holies, as robbers, let them ſtrip it. let them pollute it, its defence is departed, and then farewel all its glory. Note, Thoſe are unworthy to he honoured with the form of godlineſs that will not he governed by the power of godlineſs.

23. ¶ Make a chain: for the land is full of bloody crimes, and the city is full of violence. 24. Wherefore I will bring the worſt of the heathen, and they ſhall poſſeſs their houſes: I will alſo make the pomp of the ſtrong to ceaſe, and their holy places ſhall be defiled. 25. Deſtruction cometh, and they ſhall ſeek peace, and *there ſhall be* none. 26. Miſchief ſhall come upon miſchief, and rumour ſhall be upon rumour; then ſhall they ſeek a viſion of the prophet: but the law ſhall periſh from the prieſt, and counſel from the ancients. 27. The king ſhall mourn, and the prince ſhall be clothed with deſolation, and the hands of the people of the land ſhall be troubled: I will do unto them after their way, and according to their deſerts will I judge them, and they ſhall know that I *am* the LORD.

Here is, 1. The priſoner arraigned; *Make a chain*, in which to drag the criminal to the bar and ſet him before the tribunal of divine juſtice; let him ſtand in fetters, (as a notorious malefactor) ſtand pinioned to receive his doom. Note, Thoſe that break the bands of God's laws *aſunder* and *caſt away thoſe cords from them*, will find themſelves bound and held by the chains of his judgments, which they cannot break, or caſt from them. The chain ſignified the ſiege of Jeruſalem, or the ſlavery of thoſe that were carried into captivity, or that they were all bound over to the righteous judgment of God, *reſerved in chains*.

2. The indictment drawn up againſt the priſoner; *The land is full of bloody crimes*, full of *the judgments of blood*, ſo the word is, *i. e.* of the guilt of blood which they had ſhed under the colour of juſtice, and by forms of law, with the ſolemnity of a judgment. The innocent blood which Manaſſeh ſhed, it is probable thus ſhed, by the *judgment of the blood* was the meaſure-filling ſin of Jeruſalem, 2 *Kings* xxiv. 4. Or, it is full of ſuch crimes as by the law were to be puniſhed with death, *the judgment of blood*; idolatry, blaſphemy, witchcraft, ſodomy, and the like, were *bloody crimes*, for which particular ſinners were to die; and therefore when they were become national, there was no remedy but the nation muſt be cut off. Note, *Bloody crimes* will be puniſhed with *bloody judgments*. The city, the city of David, the holy city, that ſhould have been the pattern of righteouſneſs, the protector of it, and the puniſher of wrong, is now *full of violence*; the rulers of that city having greater power and reputation, are greater oppreſſors than any others. This was ſadly to be lamented, *How is the faithful city become a harlot!*

3. Judgment given upon this indictment. God will reckon with them, not only for the profaning of his ſanctuary, but for the perverting of juſtice between man and man, for as *holineſs becomes his houſe*, ſo the *righteous Lord loveth righteouſneſs*, and is the avenger of unrighteouſneſs. Now the judgment given is,

1. That ſince they had walked in the way of the heathen, and done worſe than they, God would *bring the worſt of the heathen upon them* to deſtroy them and lay them waſte, the moſt barbarous and outrageous, that have the leaſt compaſſion to mankind, and the greateſt antipathy to the Jews. Note, Of the heathen ſome are worſe than other, and God ſometimes picks out the worſt to be a ſcourge to his own people, becauſe he intends them for the fire when the work is done.

2. That ſince they had filled their houſes with goods unjuſtly got, and uſed their pomp and power for the cruſhing and oppreſſing of the weak, God would give their houſes to be poſſeſſed, and all the furniture of them to be enjoyed by ſtrangers, and *make the pomp of the ſtrong to ceaſe*, ſo that their great men ſhould not dazzle the eyes of the weak-ſighted with their pomp, nor with their *might* at any time prevail againſt *right*, as they had done.

3. That ſince they had *defiled the holy places* with their idolatries, God would defile them with his judgments; ſince they had ſet up the images of other gods in the temple, God would remove thence the tokens of the preſence of their own God. When the holy places are deſerted by their God, they will ſoon be defiled by their enemies.

4. Since they had followed one ſin with another, God would purſue them with one judgment upon another. *Deſtruction cometh, utter deſtruction*, ver. 25. for there ſhall come *miſchief upon miſchief* to ruin you, and *rumour upon rumour* to frighten you; like the waves in a ſtorm, one upon the neck of another, Note, Sinners that are marked for ruin ſhall be proſecuted to it, for God will overcome when he judgeth.

5. Since they had diſappointed God's expectations from them, he would diſappoint their expectations from him. For, (1.) They ſhall not have the *deliverance out of their troubles* that they expect; they ſhall *ſeek peace*, i. e. they ſhall deſire it, and pray for it, they ſhall endeavour it and expect it, but *there ſhall be none*, their attempts both to court their enemies, and to conquer them, ſhall be in vain, and their troubles ſhall grow worſe and worſe. (2.) They ſhall not have the direction in the trouble that they expect, *ver.* 26. *they ſhall ſeek a viſion of the prophet*, ſhall deſire, for their ſupport under their troubles, to he aſſured of a happy iſſue out of them; they did not deſire a viſion to reprove them for ſin, or to warn them of danger, but to promiſe them deliverance; ſuch meſſages they longed to hear; but *the law ſhall periſh from the prieſt*, he ſhall have no words eirher of counſel or comfort to ſay to them: They would not hear what God had to ſay to them by way of conviction, and therefore he has nothing to ſay to them by way of encouragement. *Counſel ſhall periſh from the ancients*; the elders of the people that ſhould adviſe them what to do in this difficult juncture ſhall be infatuated and at their wit's end. It is bad with a people when thoſe that ſhould be their counſellors know not how to conſider within themſelves, conſult with one another, or counſel them.

6. Since they had animated and encouraged one another to ſin, God would diſpirit and diſhearten them all, ſo that they ſhould not be able to make head againſt the judgments of God that were breaking in upon them. All orders and degrees of men ſhall lie down by conſent under the load, *ver.* 27. *The king*, that ſhould inſpire life into them, and *the prince*, that ſhould lead them on to attack the enemy, *they ſhall mourn*, and be *cloathed with deſolation*, their heads and hearts ſhall fail, their politicks and their courage, and then no wonder if *the hands of the people of the land* that ſhould

ſhould fight for them be *troubled*, none of the men of might ſhall *find their hands*. What can men contrive or do for themſelves when God is departed from them, and appears againſt them? All muſt needs be in *tears*, all in *trouble*, when God comes to *judge them according to their deſerts*, and ſo make them know, to their coſt, that he is the Lord, the *God to whom vengeance belongs*.

CHAP. VIII.

God having given the prophet a clear foreſight of the peoples miſeries that were haſtening on, here gives him a clear inſight into the peoples wickedneſs, by which God was provoked to bring thoſe miſeries upon them; that he might juſtify God in all his judgments, might the more particularly reprove the ſins of the people, and with the more ſatisfaction foretel their ruin. Here God, in viſion, brings him to Jeruſalem, to ſhew him the ſins that were committed there, though God had begun to contend with them, ver. 1,—4. *and there he ſees,* (1.) *The image of jealouſy ſet up at the gate of the altar*, ver. 5, 6. (2.) *The elders of Iſrael worſhipping all manner of images in a ſecret chamber*, ver. 7,—12. (3.) *The women weeping for Tammuz*, ver. 13, 14. (4.) *The men worſhipping the ſun*, ver. 15, 16. *And then appeals to him whether ſuch a provoking people ſhould have any pity ſhewed them*, ver. 17, 18.

1. AND it came to paſs in the ſixth year, in the ſixth *month*, in the fifth *day* of the month, *as* I ſat in mine houſe, and the elders of Judah ſat before me, that the hand of the LORD God fell there upon me. 2. Then I beheld, and lo, a likeneſs as the appearance of fire: from the appearance of his loins even downward, fire: and from his loins even upward, as the appearance of brightneſs, as the colour of amber. 3. And he put forth the form of an hand, and took me by a lock of mine head, and the ſpirit lift me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the viſions of God to Jeruſalem, to the door of the inner gate, that looketh toward the north, where *was* the ſeat of the image of jealouſy, which provoketh to jealouſy. 4. And behold, the glory of the God of Iſrael *was* there, according to the viſion that I ſaw in the plain. 5. ¶ Then ſaid he unto me, Son of man, lift up thine eyes now the way towards the north: ſo I lift up mine eyes the way towards the north, and behold, northward at the gate of the altar, this image of jealouſy in the entry. 6. He ſaid furthermore unto me, Son of man, ſeeſt thou what they do? *even* the great abominations that the houſe of Iſrael committeth here, that I ſhould go far off from my ſanctuary; but turn thee yet again, *and* thou ſhalt ſee greater abominations.

Ezekiel was now in Babylon, but the meſſages of wrath he had delivered in the foregoing chapters concerning Jeruſalem, for in the peace or trouble thereof the captives looked upon themſelves to have peace or trouble; and therefore here he has a viſion of what was done at Jeruſalem, and this viſion is continued to the cloſe of the 11th chapter.

1. Here is the date of this viſion. The firſt viſion he had was in *the fifth year of the captivity*, *in the fourth month*, and *the fifth day of the month*, chap. i. 1. This was juſt 14 months after. Perhaps it was after he had lain 390 days on his left ſide, to bear the iniquity of Iſrael, and before he began the forty days on his right ſide, to bear the iniquity of Judah, for now he was ſitting in the houſe, not lying. Note, God keeps a particular account of the meſſages he ſends to us, becauſe he will ſhortly call us to account about them.

2. The opportunity is taken notice of, as well as the time.

(1.) The prophet was himſelf *ſitting in his houſe*, in a ſedate compoſed frame; deep, perhaps, in contemplation. Note, The more we retreat from the world, and retire into our own hearts, the better frame we are in for communion with God: they that *ſit down* to conſider what they have learned ſhall be taught more. Or, he *ſate in his houſe* ready to preach to the company that reſorted to him, but waiting for inſtructions what to ſay. God will communicate more knowledge to thoſe who are communicative of what they do know. (2.) The *elders of Judah*, that were now in captivity with him, *ſat before him*. It is probable it was on the ſabbath-day, and that it was uſual for them to attend on the prophet every ſabbath-day, both to hear the word from him, and to join with him in prayer and praiſe: and how could they ſpend the ſabbath better, now they had neither temple nor ſynagogue, prieſt nor altar? It was a great mercy that they had opportunity to ſpend it ſo well, as the good people in Eliſha's time, 2 *Kings* iv. 23. But ſome think it was on ſome extraordinary occaſion that they attended him, to enquire of the Lord, and *ſat down* at his feet to *hear his word*. Obſerve here, 1. When the *law was periſhed from the prieſts* at Jeruſalem, whoſe *lips ſhould keep knowledge*, chap. vii. 26. they in Babylon had a prophet to conſult. God is not tied to places or perſons. 2. Now the elders of Judah were in captivity, they paid more reſpect to God's prophets, and his word in their mouth, than they did when they lived in peace in their own land. When God brings men into the *cords of affliction*, then he *opens their ears to diſcipline*, Job xxxvi. 8, 10. Pſal. cxli. 6. Thoſe that deſpiſed viſion in the *valley of viſion*, prized it now the word of the Lord was precious, and there was *no open viſion*. 3. When our teachers are driven into corners, and are forced to preach in private houſes, we muſt diligently attend them there. A miniſter's houſe ſhould be a church for all his neighbours. St. Paul preached in his own hired houſe at Rome, and God owned him there; and *no man forbad him*.

3. The divine influence and impreſſion that the prophet was now under, *the hand of the Lord fell there upon me*. God's hand took hold of him, and arreſted him, as it were, to employ him in this viſion, but at the ſame time ſupported him to bear it.

4. The viſion that the prophet ſaw, *ver.* 2. he *beheld a likeneſs* of a man, we may ſuppoſe; for that was the likeneſs he ſaw before, but it was all *brightneſs* above the girdle, and all *fire* below; fire and flame. This agrees with the deſcription we had before of the apparition he ſaw, *chap.* i. 27. and it likely it was the ſame perſon, the man Chriſt Jeſus. It is likely the elders that *ſat with him* (as the men that journeyed with Paul ſaw a light, and were afraid) and this happy ſight they gained by attending the prophet in a private meeting, but they had no diſtinct view of him that ſpake to him, *Acts* xxii. 9.

5. The prophet's remove in viſion to Jeruſalem. The apparition he ſaw *put forth the form of a hand*, which *took him by a lock of his head*, and the Spirit was that hand which was *put forth*, for the Spirit of God is called *the finger of God*. Or, The ſpirit within him *lifted him up*, ſo that he was born up and carried on by an internal principle, not an external violence. A faithful ready ſervant of God will be *drawn by a hair*, by the leaſt intimation of the divine will to his duty, for he has that within him which inclines him to a compliance with it, *Pſal.* xxvii. 8. He was miraculouſly *liſted up between heaven and earth*, as if he were to fly away upon eagles wings. This, it is probable, (ſo Grotius thinks) the elders that ſat with him ſaw; they were witneſſes of *the hand taking him by the lock* of hair and *lifting him up*, and then, perhaps, laying him down again in a trance or ecſtaſy, while he had the following viſions, *whether in the body or out of the body*, we may ſuppoſe, he *could not tell*, no more than Paul in a like caſe, much leſs can we. Note, Thoſe are beſt prepared for communion with God, and the communications of divine light, that by divine grace are raiſed above the earth, and the things of it, to be out of their attractive force.

But being lifted up towards heaven, he was carried in viſion to Jeruſalem, and to God's ſanctuary there; for thoſe that would go to heaven muſt take that in their way. The Spirit repreſented to his mind the city and temple as plainly as if he had been there in perſon. O that by faith we could thus enter into the Jeruſalem, the holy city above, and ſee the things that are inviſible!

6. The diſcoveries that were made to him there.

1. There he ſaw the glory of God, *ver.* 4. *Behold, the glory of the God of Iſrael was there*, the ſame appearance of the living creatures, and the wheels, and the throne that he had ſeen *chap.* i. Note, God's ſervants, wherever they are, and whitherſoever they go, ought to carry about them a believing regard to the glory of God, and to ſet that always before them: and thoſe that have ſeen God's power and glory in the ſanctuary ſhould deſire to ſee it again, ſo as they have ſeen it, *Pſal.* lxiii. 2. Ezekiel has this repeated viſion of the glory of God, both to give credit to, and to put honour upon the following diſcoveries. But it ſeems to have a further intention here; it was to aggravate this ſin of Iſrael, in changing their own God, the God of Iſrael, who is a God of ſo much glory as here he appears to be, for dunghil gods, ſcandalous gods, falſe gods, aud indeed no gods. Note, The more glorious we ſee God to be, the more odious we ſhall ſee ſin to be, eſpecially idolatry, which turns his truth into a lie, his glory into ſhame. It was alſo to aggravate their approaching miſery, when this glory of the Lord ſhould remove from them, *chap.* xi. 23. and leave the houſe and city deſolate.

2. There he ſaw the reproach of Iſrael, and that was *the image of jealouſy*, ſet *northward*, *at the gate of the altar*, ver. 3, 5. What image this was is uncertain; probably, an image of Baal, or of the grove, which Manaſſeh made and ſet in the temple, 2 *Kings* xxi. 7. 2 *Chron.* xxxiii. 3. which Joſiah removed, but his ſucceſſors, it ſeems, replaced there, as probably they did the *chariots of the ſun*, which he found *at the entring in of the houſe of the Lord*, 2 *Kings* xxiii. 11. and this is here ſaid to be *in the entry*. But the prophet, inſtead of telling us what image it was, which might gratify our curioſity, tells us, it was *the image of jealouſy*, to convince our conſciences, that whatever image it was, it was in the higheſt degree offenſive to God, and *provoked him to jealouſy*; he reſented it as a husband would reſent the whoredoms of his wife, and would certainly revenge it; for *God is jealous*, *and the Lord revengeth*, Nah. i. 2. The very ſetting up of this image *in the houſe of the Lord* was enough to *provoke him to jealouſy*; for it is in the matters of his worſhip that we are particularly told, *I the Lord thy*

thy God am a jealous God. They that placed this image at *the door of the inner gate*, where the people aſſembled, called *the gate of the altar*, ver. 5. thereby plainly intended, (1.) To affront God, to provoke him to his face, by advancing an idol to be a rival with him for the adorations of his people, in contempt of his law, and in defiance of his juſtice. (2.) To debauch the people, and pick them up as they were entring into the courts of the Lord's houſe to bring their offerings to him, and to tempt them to offer them to this image; like the adultereſs Solomon deſcribes, that *ſits at the door of her houſe, to call paſſengers who go right on their ways, Whoſo is ſimple let him turn in hither*, Prov. ix. 14. With good reaſon therefore is this called *the image of jealouſy.*

We may well imagine what a ſurprize, and what a grief it was to Ezekiel to ſee this image in the houſe of God, when he was in hopes that the judgments they were under had, by this time, wrought ſome reformation among them: but there is more wickedneſs in the world, in the church, than good men think there is. And now, 1. God appeals to him whether this was not bad enough, and a ſufficient ground for God to go upon in caſting off this people, and abandoning them to ruin. Could he, or any one elſe, expect any other but *that God ſhould go far from his ſanctuary*, when there were ſuch abominations committed there, in that very place; nay, was he not perfectly driven thence, they did theſe things deſignedly, and on purpoſe that he ſhould leave his ſanctuary, and ſo ſhall their doom be; they have hereby, in effect, like the Gadarens, deſired him *to depart out of their coaſts*, and therefore he will depart, he will no more dignify and protect his ſanctuary, as he had done, but will give it up to reproach and ruin. But, 2. Though this is bad enough, and ſerves abundantly to juſtify God in all that he brings upon them, yet the matter will appear to be much worſe. *But turn thee yet again*, and thou wilt be amazed to *ſee greater abominations than theſe.* Where there is one abomination it will be found there are many more. Sins do not go alone.

7. ¶ And he brought me to the door of the court; and when I looked, behold, a hole in the wall. 8. Then ſaid he unto me, Son of man, dig now in the wall: and when I had digged in the wall, behold a door. 9. And he ſaid unto me, Go in, and behold the wicked abominations that they do here. 10. So I went in and ſaw, and behold, every form of creeping things, and abominable beaſts, and all the idols of the houſe of Iſrael pourtrayed upon the wall round about. 11. And there ſtood before them ſeventy men of the ancients of the houſe of Iſrael, and in the midſt of them ſtood Jaazaniah the ſon of Shaphan, with every man his cenſer in his hand, and a thick cloud of incenſe went up. 12. Then ſaid he unto me, Son of man, haſt thou ſeen what the ancients of the houſe of Iſrael do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery, for they ſay, the LORD ſeeth us not, the LORD hath forſaken the earth.

We have here a further diſcovery of the abominations that were committed at Jeruſalem, and within the confines of the temple too. Now obſerve,

1. How this diſcovery is made. God in viſion brought him to the *door of the court*, the outer court, along the ſides of which the prieſts lodgings were. God could have introduced him at firſt into *the chambers of imagery*, but he brings him to them by degrees, partly to employ his own induſtry, in ſearching out theſe myſteries of iniquity, and partly to make him ſenſible with what care and caution thoſe idolaters concealed their idolatries. Before the prieſts apartments they had run up a wall, to make them the more private, that they might not lie open to the obſervation of thoſe who paſſed by; a ſhrewd ſign they did ſomething that they had reaſon to be aſhamed of. *He that doth evil hates the light.* They were not willing that thoſe who ſaw them in God's houſe, ſhould ſee them in their own, leſt they ſhould ſee them contradict themſelves, and undo in private what they did in publick. But *behold, a hole in the wall*, ver. 7. a ſpy-hole, by which you might ſee that which would give cauſe to ſuſpect them. When hypocrites ſcreen themſelves behind the wall of an external profeſſion, and with it think to conceal their wickedneſs from the eye of the world, and carry on their deſigns the more ſucceſsfully, it is hard for them to manage it with ſo much art but that there is ſome hole or other left in the wall, ſomething that betrays them to thoſe who look diligently, not to be what they pretend to be. The aſſes ears in the fable appeared from under the lion's skin. This *hole in the wall* Ezekiel made wider, and *behold a door*, ver. 8. This door he goes in by into *the treaſury*, or ſome of the apartments of the prieſts, and ſees *the wicked abominations that they do there*, ver. 9. Note, Thoſe that would diſcover the myſtery of iniquity in others, or in themſelves, muſt accompliſh a diligent ſearch; for Satan hath his wiles, and depths, and devices, which we ſhould not be ignorant of, and *the heart is deceitful above all things*; in the examining of it therefore we are concerned to be very ſtrict.

2. What the diſcovery is; it is a very melancholy one.

(1.) He ſees a chamber ſet round with idolatrous pictures, *ver.* 10. *All the idols of the houſe of Iſrael*, which they had borrowed from the neighbour nations, were *pourtrayed upon the wall round about*, even the vileſt of them, *the forms of creeping things* which they worſhipped, and *beaſts*, even *abominable ones*, that are poiſonous and venomous; at leaſt, they were abominable when they were worſhipped. This was a ſort of a pantheon, a collection of all the idols together, which they paid their devotions to. Though the ſecond commandment, in the letter of it, forbids only graven images, yet painted ones are as bad, and as dangerous.

(2.) He ſees this chamber filled with idolatrous worſhippers, *ver.* 11. There were *ſeventy men of the elders of Iſrael* offering incenſe to theſe painted idols. Here was a great number of idolaters ſtrengthening one another's hands in this wickedneſs, though it was in a private chamber, and the meeting induſtriouſly concealed, yet here were ſeventy men engaged in it; I doubt theſe elders were many more than thoſe in Babylon that *ſat before* the prophet *in his houſe*, ver. 1. They were *ſeventy men*, the number of the great Sanhedrin, or chief counſel of the nation, and we have reaſon to fear, the ſame men; for they were *the ancients of the houſe of Iſrael*, not only in age, but in office, who were bound, by the duty of their place, to reſtrain and puniſh idolatry, and to deſtroy and aboliſh all ſuperſtitious images wherever they found them; yet theſe were they that did themſelves worſhip them in private, ſo undermining that religion, which, in publick, they profeſſed to own and promote, only becauſe by it they held their preferments. They had *every man his cenſer in his hand*; ſo fond were they of the idolatrous ſervice, that they would all be their own prieſts! and very prodigal they were of their perfumes in honour of theſe images, for *a thick cloud of incenſe went up*, that filled the room. O that the zeal of theſe idolaters might ſhame the worſhippers of the true God out of their indifferency to his ſervice! The prophet took particular notice of one that he knew, who *ſtood in the midſt of* theſe idolaters, as chief among them, being, perhaps, preſident of the great council at this time, or moſt forward in this wickedneſs. No wonder the people were corrupt, when the elders were ſo: The ſins of leaders are leading ſins.

(3.) What the remark is that is made upon it, *ver.* 12. *Son of man, haſt thou ſeen this?* Couldſt thou have imagined that there was ſuch wickedneſs committed? It is here obſerved, concerning it, 1. That it was done *in the dark*; for ſinful works are *works of darkneſs*: They concealed it, leſt they ſhould loſe their places, or, at leaſt, their credit. There is a great deal of ſecret wickedneſs in the world, which the day will declare; *the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God.* 2. That this one idolatrous chapel was but a ſpecimen of many the like; here they met together, to worſhip their images in conſort, but, it ſhould ſeem, they had *every man the chamber of his imagery* beſides, a room in his own houſe for this purpoſe, in which every man gratified his own fancy with ſuch pictures as he liked beſt: Idolaters had their houſhold gods, and their family worſhip of them in private, which is a ſhame to thoſe who call themſelves chriſtians, and yet have no church in their houſe, no worſhip of God in their family. Had they *chambers of imagery*, and ſhall not we have chambers of devotion? 3. That atheiſm was at the bottom of their idolatry: They worſhip images *in the dark*, the images of the gods of other nations, and *they ſay*, Jehovah, the God of Iſrael, whom we ſhould ſerve, *ſeeth us not*; Jehovah *hath forſaken the earth*, and we may worſhip what god we will, he regards us not. (1.) They think themſelves out of God's ſight; *they ſay, The Lord ſeeth us not:* They imagined, becauſe the matter was carried on ſo cloſely, that men could not diſcover it, nor did any of their neighbours ſuſpect them to be idolaters, that therefore it was hid from the eye of God; as if there were any *darkneſs, or ſhadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themſelves.* Note, A practical disbelief of God's omniſcience is at the bottom of our treacherous departure from him; but the church argues right, as to this very ſin of idolatry, *Pſalm* xliv. 20. *If we have forgotten the name of our God, and ſtretched forth our hand to a ſtrange god, ſhall not God ſearch this out?* No doubt he ſhall. (2.) They think themſelves out of God's care; *the Lord hath forſaken the earth*, and looks not after the affairs of it, and then we had as good worſhip any other god as him. Or, he *hath forſaken* our land, and left it to be a prey to its enemies, and therefore it is time for us to look out for ſome other god, to whom to commit the protection of it; our one God cannot or will not deliver us, and therefore let us have many. This was a blaſphemous reflexion upon God, as if he had forſaken them firſt, elſe they would not have forſaken him. Note, Thoſe are ripe indeed for ruin, who are arrived to ſuch a pitch of impudence, as to lay the blame of their ſins upon God himſelf.

13. ¶ He ſaid alſo unto me, Turn thee yet again, *and* thou ſhalt ſee greater abominations that they do. 14. Then he brought me to the door of the gate of the LORDs houſe, which *was* towards the north, and behold, there ſat women weeping for Tammuz. 15. ¶ Then ſaid he unto me, Haſt thou ſeen *this*, O ſon of man? turn thee yet again, *and* thou ſhalt ſee greater abomina-

bominations than theſe. 16. And he brought me into the inner court of the LORDs houſe, and behold, at the door of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, *were* about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the LORD, and their faces toward the eaſt, and they worſhipped the ſun toward the eaſt. 17. ¶ Then he ſaid unto me, Haſt thou ſeen *this*, O ſon of man? Is it a light thing to the houſe of Judah, that they commit the abominations which they commit here? for they have filled the land with violence, and have returned to provoke me to anger; and lo, they put the branch to their noſe. 18. Therefore will I alſo deal in fury: mine eye ſhall not ſpare, neither will I have pity: and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, *yet* will I not hear them.

Here we have,

1. More and greater abominations diſcovered to the prophet: He thought what he had ſeen was bad enough, and yet, *ver.* 13. *Turn thee again, and thou ſhalt ſee yet greater abominations*; and greater ſtill, *ver.* 15. as before, *ver.* 6. There are thoſe who live in retirement, that do not think what wickedneſs there is in this world; and the more we converſe with it, and the further we go abroad into it, the more corrupt we ſee it. When we have ſeen that which is bad, we may have our wonder at it made to ceaſe, by the diſcovery of that which, upon ſome account or other, is a great deal worſe. We ſhall find it ſo in examining our own hearts, and ſearching into them, there is a world of iniquity in them, a great abundance and variety of abominations; and when we have found out much amiſs, ſtill we ſhall find more; for *the heart is deſperately wicked, who can know it* perfectly?

Now the abominations here diſcovered were,

(1.) *Women weeping for Tammuz*, ver. 14. an abominable thing indeed, that any ſhould chooſe rather to ſerve an idol in tears, than to ſerve the true God *with joyfulneſs and gladneſs of heart!* yet ſuch abſurdities as theſe are they guilty of, who *follow after lying vanities*, and *forſake their own mercies*. Some think, it was for Adonis, an idol among the Greeks; others, for Oſiris, an idol of the Egyptians, that they ſhed theſe tears. The image, they ſay, was made to weep, and then the worſhippers wept with it. They bewailed the death of this Tammuz, and anon rejoiced in its returning to life again. Theſe mourning women *ſat at the door of the gate of the Lord's houſe*, and there ſhed their idolatrous tears, as it were in defiance of God, and the ſacred rites of his worſhip; and, ſome think, with their idolatry, proſtrating themſelves alſo to corporeal whoredom; for theſe two commonly went together; and they that diſhonoured the divine nature by the one, were juſtly *given up to vile affections*, and a reprobate ſenſe, to diſhonour the human nature, which no where ever ſunk ſo far below it ſelf as in theſe idolatrous rites.

(2.) *Men worſhipping the ſun*, ver. 16. And this was ſo much the greater an abomination that it was practiſed *in the inner court of the Lord's houſe, at the door of the temple of the Lord, between the porch and the altar*; there, where the moſt ſacred rites of their holy religion uſed to be performed, was this abominable wickedneſs committed; juſtly might God in jealouſy ſay to thoſe who thus affronted him at his own door, as the king to Haman, *Will he force the queen alſo before me in the houſe?* Here *were about twenty five men* giving that honour to the ſun, which is due to God only; ſome think, they were the king and his princes; it ſhould rather ſeem that they were prieſts, for this was the court of the prieſts, and the proper place to find them in: They that were intruſted with the true religion, had it committed to their care, and were charged with the cuſtody of it, they were the men that betrayed it. 1. They turned *their backs towards the temple of the Lord*, reſolvedly forgetting it, and deſignedly ſlighting it, and putting contempt upon it. Note, When men turn their backs upon God's inſtitutions, and deſpiſe them, it is no marvel if they wander endleſly after their own inventions: Impiety is the beginning of idolatry, and all iniquity. 2. They turned *their faces towards the eaſt, and worſhipped the ſun*, the riſing ſun. This was an ancient inſtance of idolatry, it is mentioned in Job's time, *Job* xxxi. 26. and had been generally practiſed among the nations, ſome worſhipping the ſun under one name, others under another; theſe prieſts finding it had antiquity and general conſent and uſage on its ſide (the two pleas which the papiſts uſe at this day in defence of their ſuperſtitious rites, and particularly this of worſhipping towards the eaſt) practiſed it in the court of the temple, thinking it an omiſſion that it was not inſerted in their ritual. See the folly of idolaters, in worſhipping that as a god, and calling it Baal, a lord, which God made to be a ſervant to the univerſe! for ſo the ſun is, and ſo his name Shemeſh ſignifies, *Deut.* iv. 29. and in adoring the borrowed light, and deſpiſing the *Father of lights!*

2. The inference drawn from theſe diſcoveries, *ver.* 17. *Haſt thou ſeen this, O ſon of man?* and couldſt thou have thought ever to ſee ſuch things done in the temple of the Lord? Now, 1. He appeals to the prophet himſelf concerning the heinouſneſs of the crime: Can he think it *is a light thing to the houſe of Judah*, who know and profeſs better things, and are dignified with ſo many privileges above other nations? Is it an excuſable thing in them, that have God's oracles and ordinances, *that they commit the abominations which they commit here?* Do not they deſerve to ſuffer that thus ſin? Should not ſuch abominations as theſe *make deſolate?* Dan. ix. 27. 2. He aggravates it from the fraud and oppreſſion that were to be found in all parts of the nation: *They have filled the land with violence.* It is not ſtrange, if they that wrong God thus, make no conſcience of wronging one another, and with all that is ſacred, trample likewiſe upon all that is juſt: And their wickedneſs in their converſations, made even the worſhip they paid to their own God an abomination, *Iſa.* i. 11, *&c. They fill the land with violence*, and then they return to the temple *to provoke me to anger* there; for even their ſacrifices, inſtead of making an atonement, do but add to their guilt; they *return to provoke me*, i. e. they repeat the provocation, do it, and do it again; *and lo, they put the branch to their noſe*; a proverbial expreſſion, noting, perhaps, their ſcoffing at God, and having him in deriſion; they ſnuffed at his ſervice, as men do when they *put a branch to their noſe*: Or, it was ſome cuſtom uſed by idolaters in honour of the idols they ſerved; we read of garlands uſed in their idolatrous worſhips, *Acts* xiv. 13. out of which every zealot took a branch, which they ſmelled to as a noſegay. Dr. Lightfoot, *Ho. Heb. in Joh.* xv. 6. gives another ſenſe of this place; *They put the branch to their wrath*, or, *to his wrath*, as the Maſorites read it, *i. e.* they are ſtill bringing more fuel (ſuch as the withered branches of the vine) to the fire of divine wrath, which they have already kindled, as if that wrath did not burn hot enough already. Or, *putting the branch to the noſe* may ſignify, the giving of a very great affront and provocation either to God or man; they are an abuſive generation of men. 3. He paſſeth ſentence upon them that they ſhall be utterly cut off. *Therefore*, becauſe they are thus furiouſly bent upon ſin, *I will alſo deal in fury* with them, *ver.* 18. *They filled the land with* their *violence*, and God will fill it with the violence of their enemies; and he will not lend a favourable ear to the ſuggeſtions, either, (1.) Of his own pity; *mine eye ſhall not ſpare, neither will I have pity*; repentance ſhall be hid from his eyes; or, (2.) Of their prayers; *though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them*; for ſtill their ſins cry louder for vengeance, than their prayers cry for mercy: God will now be as deaf to their prayers, as their own idols were, on whom they cried aloud, but in vain, 1 *Kings* xviii. 26. Time was when God was ready to have heard even *before they cried*, and to *anſwer while they were yet ſpeaking*; but now *they ſhall ſeek me early, and not find me*, Prov. i. 28. It is not the loud voice, but the upright heart that God will regard.

CHAP. IX.

The prophet had in viſion ſeen the wickedneſs that was committed at Jeruſalem in the foregoing chapter, and we may be ſure it was not repreſented to him worſe than really it was, now here follows of courſe a repreſentation of their ruin approaching; for when ſin goes before, judgments come next. Here is, 1. *Preparation made of inſtruments that were to be employed in the deſtruction of the city,* ver. 1, 2. 2. *The removal of the Shechinah from the cherubim to the threſhold of the temple,* ver. 3. 3. *Orders given to one of the perſons employed, who is diſtinguiſhed from the reſt, for the marking of a remnant to be preſerved from the common deſtruction,* ver. 3, 4. 4. *The warrant ſigned for the execution of thoſe that were not marked, and the execution begun accordingly,* ver. 5,—7. 5. *The prophet's interceſſion for the mitigation of the ſentence, and a denial of any mitigation, the decree being now gone forth,* ver. 8,—10. 6. *The report made by them that were to mark the pious remnant of what he had done in that matter,* ver. 11. *And this ſhews an uſual method of providence in the government of the world.*

1. HE cried alſo in mine ears with a loud voice, ſaying, Cauſe them that have charge over the city, to draw near, even every man *with* his deſtroying weapon in his hand. 2. And behold, ſix men came from the way of the higher gate, which lieth toward the north, and every man a ſlaughter weapon in his hand: and one man among them *was* clothed with linen, with a writers inkhorn by his ſide, and they went in and ſtood beſide the braſen altar. 3. And the glory of the God of Iſrael was gone up from the cherub whereupon he was, to the threſhold of the houſe, and he called to the man clothed with linen, which *had* the writers inkhorn by his ſide; 4. And the LORD ſaid unto him, Go through the midſt of the city, through the midſt of Jeruſalem, and ſet a mark upon the foreheads of the men that ſigh, and that cry for all the abominations *that be* done in the midſt thereof.

In theſe verſes we have,

1. The ſummons given to Jeruſalem's deſtroyers to come forth and give their attendance. He that appeared to the prophet, *chap.* viii. 2.

viii. 2. that had brought him to Jeruſalem, and had ſhewed the wickedneſs that was done there, *he cried, Cauſe them that have charge over the city to draw near*, ver. 1. or, as it might better be read, and nearer the original, *They that have charge over the city are drawing near*. He had ſaid, *chap.* viii. 18. *I will deal in fury*; now, ſaith he to the prophet, thou ſhalt ſee who are to be employed as the inſtruments of my wrath; *appropinquaverunt viſitationes civitatis*; the viſitations or viſitors of the city are at hand; they would not *know the day of their viſitation* in mercy, and now they are to be *viſited in wrath*.

Obſerve, (1.) How the notice of this is given to the prophet; *he cried it in mine ears with a loud voice*, which intimates the vehemency of him that ſpoke; when men are highly provoked, and threaten in anger, they ſpeak loud; they that regard not the counſels God gives them in a ſtill ſmall voice, ſhall be made to hear the threatnings, to hear and tremble: It notes alſo the prophet's unwillingneſs to be told this; he was deaf on that ear, but there is no remedy, their ſin will not admit an excuſe, and therefore their judgment will not admit a delay; *he cried it in mine ears with a loud voice*, he made me hear it, and I heard it with a ſad heart.

(2.) What this notice is: There are thoſe *that have charge over the city* to deſtroy it, not the Chaldean armies, they are to be indeed employed in this work, but they are not the viſitors, they are only the ſervants, or tools rather; God's angels have received a charge now to lay that city waſte, which they had long had a charge to protect and watch over; they are at hand, as deſtroying angels, as miniſters of wrath, for *every man hath his deſtroying weapon in his hand*, as the angel that kept the way of the tree of life with a flaming ſword. Note, Thoſe that have by ſin made God their enemy, have made the good angels their enemies too. Theſe viſitors are called and *cauſed to draw near*. Note, God has miniſters of wrath always within call, always at command; inviſible powers, by whom he accompliſheth his purpoſes. The prophet is made to ſee this in viſion, that he might, with the greater aſſurance, in his preaching, denounce theſe judgments. God told it him with a loud voice, *taught it him with a ſtrong hand*, Iſa. viii. 11. that it might make the deeper impreſſion upon him, and that he might thus proclaim it in the peoples ears.

2. Their appearance upon theſe ſummons is recorded. Preſently *ſix men came*, ver. 2. one for each of the principal gates of Jeruſalem. Two deſtroying angels were ſent againſt Sodom, but ſix againſt Jeruſalem, for Jeruſalem's doom in the judgment will be thrice as heavy as that of Sodom. There is an angel watching at every gate to deſtroy, to bring in judgments from every quarter, and to take heed that none eſcape. One angel ſerved to deſtroy the firſt-born of Egypt, and the camp of the Aſſyrians, but here are ſix: In the Revelation we find ſeven, that were to *pour out the vials of God's wrath*, Rev. xv. 6. They came with every one *a ſlaughter-weapon in his hand*, prepared for the work to which they were called. The nations, of which the king of Babylon's army was compoſed, which ſome reckon to be ſix, and the commanders of his army, of whom ſix are named, as principal, *Jer.* xxxix. 3. may be called the ſlaughter-weapons in the hands of the angels. The angels are throughly furniſhed for every ſervice.

Obſerve, (1.) From whence they came; *from the way of the higher gate, which lieth toward the north*, ver. 2. either, becauſe the Chaldeans came from the north, *Jer.* i. 14. *Out of the north an evil ſhall break forth*; or, becauſe the image of jealouſy was ſet up *at the door of the inner gate, that looks towards the north*, chap. viii. 3, 5. At that gate of the temple the deſtroying angels entered, to ſhew what it was that opened the door to them. Note, That way that ſin lies, judgments may be expected to come. (2.) Obſerve where they placed themſelves; *they went in and ſtood beſide the braſen altar*, on which ſacrifices were wont to be offered, and atonement made. When they acted as deſtroyers they acted as ſacrificers, not from any perſonal revenge or ill-will, but with a pure and ſincere regard to the glory of God; for to his juſtice all they ſlew were offered up as victims. *They ſtood by the altar*, as it were to protect and vindicate that, and plead its righteous cauſe, and avenge the horrid profanation of it. At the altar they were to receive their commiſſion to deſtroy, to intimate, that the iniquity of Jeruſalem, like that of Eli's houſe, was *not to be purged by ſacrifice*.

3. The notice taken of one among the deſtroying angels, diſtinguiſhed in his habit from the reſt, from whom ſome favour might be expected; it ſhould ſeem he was not one of the ſix, but *among them*, to ſee that mercy be mixed with judgment, *ver.* 2. This *man was clothed with linen*, as the prieſts were, and he had *a writer's inkhorn* hanging at *his ſide*, as anciently attorneys and lawyers clerks had, which he was to make uſe of, as the other ſix were to make uſe of their *deſtroying weapons*. Here the honours of the pen exceeded thoſe of the ſword; they were angels that bore the ſword, but he was the Lord of angels that made uſe of the *writer's inkhorn*; for it is generally agreed, among the beſt interpreters, that this man repreſented Chriſt as Mediator, ſaving thoſe that are his from the flaming ſword of divine juſtice. He is our *High-prieſt*, clothed with holineſs, for that was ſignified by the *fine linen*, Rev. xix. 8. As prophet, he wears the *writer's inkhorn*, the book of life is the Lamb's book; the great things of the law and goſpel, which God has written to us, are of his writing, for it is the Spirit of Chriſt, in the writers of the ſcripture, that teſtifies to us, and the bible is *the revelation of Jeſus Chriſt*. Note, It is matter of great comfort to all good chriſtians, that, in the midſt of the deſtroyers, and the deſtructions that are abroad, there is a Mediator, a great High-prieſt, who has an intereſt in heaven, and whom ſaints on earth have an intereſt in.

4. The removal of the appearance of the divine glory from over the cherubim. Some think, this was that uſual diſplay of the divine glory which was between the cherubim over the mercy-ſeat, in the moſt holy place, that took leave of them now, and never returned; for it is ſuppoſed it was not in the ſecond temple. Others think, it was that diſplay of the divine glory which the prophet now ſaw over the cherub in viſion; and this is more probable, becauſe this is called *the glory of the God of Iſrael*, chap. viii. 4. and this is it which he had now his eye upon; this was gone *to the threſhold of the houſe*, as it were, to call to the ſervants that attended without the door, to ſend them on their errand, and give them their inſtructions. And the removal of this, as well as the former, might be ſignificant of God's departure from them, and leaving them their houſe deſolate; and when God goes, all good goes; but he goes from none till they firſt drive him from them: He went at firſt no further than *the threſhold*, that he might ſhew how loth he was to depart, and might give them both time and encouragement to invite his return to them, and his ſtay with them. Note, God's departures from a people are gradual, but gracious ſouls are ſoon aware of the firſt ſtep he takes towards a remove. Ezekiel preſently obſerved that *the glory of the God of Iſrael was gone up from the cherub*: And what is a viſion of angels if God be gone?

5. The charge given *to the man clothed* in *linen* to ſecure the pious remnant from the general deſolation. We do not read that this Saviour was ſummoned and ſent for, as the deſtroyers were; for he is always ready, *appearing in the preſence of God for us*; and to him, as the moſt proper perſon, the care of thoſe that are marked for ſalvation is committed, *ver.* 4. Now obſerve,

(1.) The diſtinguiſhing character of this remnant that is to be ſaved: They are ſuch as *ſigh and cry*, ſigh in themſelves, as men in pain and diſtreſs, cry to God in prayer, as men in earneſt, becauſe of *all the abominations that* are committed in Jeruſalem: It was not only the idolatries they were guilty of, but all their other enormities that were abominations to God. Theſe pious few had witneſſed againſt thoſe abominations, and had done what they could, in their places, to ſuppreſs them; but, finding all their attempts for the reformation of manners fruitleſs, they ſat down and *ſighed and cried*, wept in ſecret, and complained to God, becauſe of the diſhonour done to his name by their wickedneſs, and the ruin it was bringing upon their church and nation. Note, It is not enough that we do not delight in the ſins of others, and that we have not fellowſhip with them, but we muſt mourn for them, and lay them to heart; muſt grieve for that which we cannot help, as thoſe that hate ſin for its own ſake, and have a tender concern for the ſouls of others, as David, *Pſalm* cxix. 136. and Lot, who *vexed his righteous ſoul* with the wicked converſation of his neighbours. The abominations committed in Jeruſalem are to be in a ſpecial manner lamented, becauſe they are in a particular manner offenſive to God.

(2.) The diſtinguiſhing care taken of them. Orders are given to find them all out that are of ſuch a pious publick ſpirit: *Go through the midſt of the city* in queſt of them, and though they are never ſo much diſperſed, and never ſo cloſely hid from the fury of their perſecutors, yet ſo that you diſcover them, *and ſet a mark upon* their *foreheads*, 1. To ſignify that God owns them for his, and he will confeſs them another day. A work of grace in the ſoul is to God *a mark upon the forehead*, which he will acknowledge as his mark, and by which *he knows them that are his*. 2. To give to them, who are thus marked, an aſſurance of God's favour, that they may know it themſelves; and the comfort of knowing it, will be the moſt powerful ſupport and cordial in calamitous times. What need we perplex our ſelves about this temporal life, if we know, by the mark, that we have eternal life? 3. To be a direction to the deſtroyers whom to paſs by, as the blood upon the door-poſts was an indication that that was an Iſraelite's houſe, and the firſt-born there muſt not be ſlain. Note, Thoſe who keep themſelves pure in times of common iniquity, God will keep them ſafe in times of common calamity. They that diſtinguiſh themſelves, ſhall be diſtinguiſhed; that cry for other mens ſins, ſhall not need to cry for their own afflictions; for they ſhall be either delivered from them, or comforted under them; God will ſet a mark upon his mourners, will book their ſighs, and bottle their tears. The *ſealing of the ſervants of God in their foreheads*, Rev. vii. 3. was the ſame token of the care God has of his own people with this here, only this was to ſecure them from being deſtroyed, that from being ſeduced, which is equivalent.

5. ¶ And to the others he ſaid in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and ſmite: let not your eye ſpare, neither have ye pity. 6. Slay utterly old *and* young, both maids and little children, and women; but come not near any man upon whom *is* the mark; and begin at my ſanctuary: then they began at the ancient men which *were* before the houſe. 7. And he ſaid unto them, Defile the houſe, and fill the courts with

with the ſlain, go ye forth, and they went forth and ſlew in the city. 8. ¶ And it came to paſs while they were ſlaying them, and I was left, that I fell upon my face, and cried, and ſaid, Ah, LORD God, wilt thou deſtroy all the reſidue of Iſrael, in thy pouring out of thy fury upon Jeruſalem? 9. Then ſaid he unto me, The iniquity of the houſe of Iſrael and Judah *is* exceeding great, and the land is full of blood, and the city full of perverſeneſs: for they ſay, The LORD hath forſaken the earth, and the LORD ſeeth not. 10. And as for me alſo, mine eye ſhall not ſpare, neither will I have pity, *but* I will recompenſe their way upon their head. 11. And behold, the man clothed with linen, which *had* the inkhorn by his ſide, reported the matter, ſaying, I have done as thou haſt commanded me.

In theſe verſes we have,

1. A command given to the deſtroyers to do execution according to their commiſſion. *They ſtood by the braſen altar*, waiting for orders, and orders are here given them to cut off and deſtroy all that were either guilty of, or acceſſary to the abominations of Jeruſalem, and that did not *ſigh and cry* for them. Note, When God has *gathered his wheat into his garner*, nothing remains but to *burn up the chaff*, Matt. iii. 12.

(1.) They are ordered to deſtroy all, 1. Without exception; they muſt *go through the city, and ſmite*; they muſt *ſlay utterly*, ſlay to deſtruction, give them their death's wound; they muſt make no diſtinction of age or ſex, but cut off *old and young*; neither the beauty of the virgins, nor the innocency of the babes ſhall ſecure them. This was fulfilled in the death of multitudes by famine and peſtilence, eſpecially by the ſword of the Chaldeans, as far as the military execution went. Sometimes even ſuch bloody work as this has been God's work: But what an evil thing is ſin then, which provokes the God of infinite mercy to ſuch ſeverity! 2. Without compaſſion; *let not your eye ſpare, neither have ye pity*, ver. 5. you muſt not ſave any whom God has doomed to deſtruction, as Saul did Agag, and the Amalekites, that is *doing the work of God deceitfully*, Jer. xlviii. 10. None needs to be more merciful than God is, and he had ſaid, *chap.* viii. 18. *Mine eye ſhall not ſpare, neither will I have pity.* Note, Thoſe that live in ſin, and hate to be reformed, will periſh in ſin, and deſerve not to be pitied; for they might eaſily have prevented the ruin, and would not.

(2.) They are warned not to do the leaſt hurt to them that were marked for ſalvation; *come not near any man upon whom is the mark*, do not ſo much as threaten or frighten any of them; it is promiſed them that there ſhall no evil come nigh them, and therefore you muſt keep at a diſtance from them. The king of Babylon gave particular orders that Jeremiah ſhould be protected, Baruch and Ebed-melech were ſecured, and, it is likely, others of Jeremiah's friends for his ſake; God had promiſed that *it ſhould go well with his remnant*, and they *ſhould be well treated*, Jer. xv. 11. and we have reaſon to think none of the mourning, praying remnant fell by the ſword of the Chaldeans, but God found out ſome way or other to ſecure them all; as in the laſt deſtruction of Jeruſalem by the Romans, the chriſtians were all ſecured in a city called Pella, and none of them periſhed with the unbelieving Jews. Note, None of thoſe ſhall be loſt whom God has marked for life and ſalvation, for the foundation of God ſtands ſure.

(3.) They are directed to *begin at the ſanctuary*, ver. 6. that ſanctuary which, in the chapter before, he had ſeen the horrid profanation of; they muſt begin there, becauſe there the wickedneſs began, which provoked God to ſend theſe judgments; the debaucheries of the prieſts were the poiſoning of the ſprings, to which all the corruption of the ſtreams was owing: The wickedneſs of the ſanctuary was of all other moſt offenſive to God, and therefore there the ſlaughter muſt begin: *Begin* there, to try if the people will take warning by the judgments of God upon their prieſts, and will repent and reform: *Begin* there, that all the world may ſee and know that the Lord, whoſe name is Jealous, is *a jealous God*, and hates ſin moſt in thoſe that are neareſt to him. Note, When judgments are abroad, they cummonly *begin at the houſe of God*, 1 Pet. ii. 17. *You only have I known, and therefore I will puniſh you*, Amos iii. 2. God's temple is a ſanctuary, a refuge and protection for penitent ſinners, but not for any that *go on ſtill in their treſpaſſes*; neither the ſacredneſs of the place, nor the eminency of their place in it, will be their ſecurity.

It ſhould ſeem the deſtroyers made ſome difficulty of putting men to death in the temple, but God bids them not boggle at that, but, ver. 7. *Defile the houſe, and fill the courts with the ſlain.* They will not be *taken from the altar*, as was appointed by the law, *Exod.* xxi. 14. but think to ſecure themſelves by *keeping hold of the horns of* it, like Joab, and therefore, like him, let them *die there*, 1 Kings ii. 30, 31. There the blood of one of God's prophets had been ſhed, *Matt.* xxiii. 35. and therefore there let their blood be ſhed. Note, If the ſervants of God's houſe defile it with their idolatries, God will juſtly ſuffer the enemies of it to defile it with their violences, *Pſalm* lxxix. 1. But theſe acts of neceſſary juſtice were really, whatever they were ceremonially, rather a purification than a pollution of the ſanctuary; it was *putting away evil from among them.*

(4.) They were appointed to *go forth into the city*, ver. 6, 7. Note, Wherever ſin has gone before, judgment will follow after: And though *judgment begins at the houſe of God*, yet it ſhall not end there: The holy city ſhall be no more a protection to the wicked people, than the holy houſe was to the wicked prieſts.

2. Here is execution done accordingly. They obſerved their orders, and, 1. *They began at the* elders, *the ancient men that were before the houſe*, and ſlew them firſt, either thoſe ſeventy ancients that worſhipped idols in their chambers, *chap.* viii. 12. or thoſe twenty five that *worſhipped the ſun between the porch and the altar*, who might more properly be ſaid to be *before the houſe*. Note, Ringleaders in ſin may expect to be firſt met with by the judgments of God; and the ſins of thoſe who are in the moſt eminent and publick ſtation call for the moſt exemplary puniſhments. 2. They proceeded to the common people; *they went forth and ſlew in the city*; for when the decree is gone forth, there ſhall be no delay; if God begin, he will make an end.

3. Here is the prophet's interceſſion for a mitigation of the judgment, and a reprieve for ſome, *ver.* 8. *While they were ſlaying them, and I was left, I fell upon my face.* Obſerve here, 1. How ſenſible the prophet was of God's mercy to him, in that he was ſpared when ſo many round about him were cut off: *Thouſands fell on his right hand, and on his left*, and yet *the deſtruction* did *not come nigh him*; *only with his eyes did he behold the juſt reward of the wicked*, Pſalm xcvii. 7, 8. He ſpeaks as one that narrowly eſcaped the deſtruction, attributing it to God's goodneſs, not his own deſerts. Note, The beſt ſaints muſt acknowledge themſelves indebted to ſparing mercy, that they are not conſumed. And when deſolating judgments are abroad, and multitudes fall by them, it ought to be accounted a great favour if we have our *lives given us for a prey*; for we might juſtly have periſhed with them that periſh. 2. Obſerve how he improved this mercy; he looked upon it that therefore he was left, that he might ſtand in the gap to turn away the wrath of God. Note, We muſt look upon it, that for this reaſon we are ſpared, that we may do good in our places, may do good by our prayers. Ezekiel did not triumph in the ſlaughter made, but his *fleſh trembled for fear of God*, as David's, *Pſal.* cxix. 120. he *fell on* his *face, and cried*, not in fear for himſelf, he was one of them that were marked, but in compaſſion to his fellow-creatures. They that ſigh and cry for the ſins of ſinners, cannot but ſigh and cry for their miſeries too; yet the day is coming, when all this concern will be intirely ſwallowed up, in a full ſatisfaction in this, that God is glorified; and they that now *fall on their faces, and cry, Ah, Lord God*, will lift up their heads, and ſing *Hallelujah*, Rev. xix. 1, 3. The prophet humbly expoſtulates with God, *Wilt thou deſtroy all the reſidue of Iſrael?* and ſhall there be none left but the few that are marked? Shall the Iſrael of God be deſtroyed? utterly deſtroyed? When there are but a few left, ſhall thoſe few be cut off, who might have been the ſeed of another generation? And will the God of Iſrael be himſelf their deſtroyer? Wilt thou now deſtroy Iſrael, who waſt wont to protect and deliver Iſrael? Wilt thou ſo *pour out thy fury upon Jeruſalem*, as by the total deſtruction of the city, to ruin the whole country too? Sure thou wilt not! Note, Though we acknowledge that *God is righteous*, yet we have leave to *plead with him concerning his judgments*, Jer. xii. 1.

4. Here is God's denial of the prophet's requeſt for a mitigation of the judgment, and his juſtification of himſelf in that denial, *ver.* 9, 10. 1. Nothing could be ſaid in extenuation of this ſin. God was as willing to ſhew mercy as the prophet could deſire; he always is ſo; but here the caſe will not admit it; it is ſuch as that mercy cannot be granted without wrong to juſtice; and it is not fit that one attribute of God ſhould be glorified at the expence of another. Is it any pleaſure to the Almighty that he ſhould deſtroy? eſpecially that he ſhould deſtroy Iſrael? By no means: But the truth is, their crimes are ſo flagrant, that the reprieve of the ſinners would be a connivance at the ſin: *The iniquity of the houſe of Judah and Iſrael is exceeding great*, there is no ſuffering them to go on at this rate, *the land is filled* with innocent *blood*, and, when the city-courts are appealed to for the defence of injured innocency, the remedy is as bad as the diſeaſe, for *the city is full of perverſeneſs*, or, *wreſting of judgment*; and that which they ſupport themſelves with in this iniquity, is the ſame atheiſtical, profane principle, with which they flattered themſelves in their idolatry, *chap.* viii. 12. *The Lord hath forſaken the earth*, and left it to us to do what we will in it; he will not intermeddle in the affairs of it; and whatever wrong we do, he *ſees not*; either knows it not, or will not take cognizance of it. Now how can theſe expect benefit by the mercy of God, who thus bid defiance to his juſtice? No, nothing can be offered by an advocate in excuſe of the crimes, while the criminal puts in ſuch a plea as this in his own vindication; and therefore, 2. Nothing can be done to mitigate the ſentence, *ver.* 10. Whatever thou thinkeſt of it, *as for me, mine eye ſhall not ſpare, neither will I have pity*; I have born with them as long as it was fit ſuch impudent ſinners ſhould be born with, and therefore now *I will recompenſe their way on their head.* Note, Sinners ſink and periſh under the weight of their own ſins; it is their own way, which they deliberately choſe, rather than the way of God, and

which they obſtinately perſiſted in, in contempt of the word of God that is *recompenſed on* them: And great iniquities juſtify God in great ſeverities; nay, he is ready to juſtify himſelf, as he doth here to the prophet, for he will be *clear when he judgeth.*

5. Here is a return made of the writ of protection, which was iſſued out for the ſecuring of them that mourned in Zion, *ver.* 11. *The man clothed with linen reported the matter*, gave an account of what he had done, in purſuance of his commiſſion; he had found out all that mourned in ſecret for the ſins of the land, and cried out againſt them by a publick teſtimony, and had marked them all in the forehead; Lord, *I have done as thou haſt commanded me.* We do not find that thoſe who were commiſſioned to deſtroy reported what deſtruction they had made, but he who was appointed to protect *reported* his *matter*, for it would be more pleaſing, both to God and to the prophet, to hear of thoſe that were ſaved, than of thoſe that periſhed: Or, this report was made now, becauſe the thing was finiſhed, whereas the deſtroying work would be a work of time, and when it was brought to an end, then the report ſhould be made. See how faithful Chriſt is to the truſt repoſed in him! Is he commanded to ſecure eternal life to the choſen remnant? He has done as was commanded him: *Of all that thou haſt given me, I have loſt none.*

CHAP. X.

The prophet had obſerved to us, chap. viii. 5. *that when he was in viſion at Jeruſalem, he ſaw the ſame appearance of the glory of God there, that he had ſeen by the river Chebar, now, in this chapter, he gives us ſome account of the appearance there, as far as was requiſite for the clearing up of two further indications of the approaching deſtruction of Jeruſalem, which God here gave the prophet.* 1. *The ſcattering of the coals of fire upon the city, which were taken from between the cherubims*, ver. 1,—7. 2. *The removal of the glory of God from the temple, and its being upon the wing to be gone*, ver. 8,—22. *When God goes out from a people, all judgments break in upon them.*

1. THEN I looked, and behold, in the firmament that *was* above the head of the cherubims, there appeared over them, as it were a ſapphire-ſtone, as the appearance of the likeneſs of a throne. 2. And he ſpake unto the man clothed with linen, and ſaid, Go in between the wheels, *even* under the cherub, and fill thine hand with coals of fire from between the cherubims, and ſcatter *them* over the city. And he went in in my ſight. 3. Now the cherubims ſtood on the right ſide of the houſe, when the man went in, and the cloud filled the inner court. 4. Then the glory of the LORD went up from the cherub, *and ſtood* over the threſhold of the houſe, and the houſe was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightneſs of the LORDs glory. 5. And the ſound of the cherubims wings was heard *even* to the utter court, as the voice of the almighty God when he ſpeaketh. 6. And it came to paſs, *that* when he had commanded the man clothed with linen, ſaying, Take fire from between the wheels, from between the cherubims; then he went in, and ſtood beſide the wheels. 7. And *one* cherub ſtretched forth his hand from between the cherubims unto the fire that *was* between the cherubims, and took *thereof*, and put *it* into the hands of *him that was* clothed with linen: who took *it*, and went out.

To poſſeſs us with a holy awe and dread of God, and to fill us with his fear, we may obſerve in this part of the viſion which the prophet had,

(1.) The glorious appearance of his majeſty. Something of the inviſible world is here made viſible; ſome faint repreſentations of its brightneſs and beauty; ſome ſhadows; but ſuch as are no more to be compared with the truth and ſubſtance, than a picture with the life; yet here is enough to oblige us all to the utmoſt reverence in our thoughts of God, and approaches to him, if we will but admit the impreſſions this diſcovery of him will make.

1. He is here *in the firmament above the head of the cherubims*, ver. 1. He manifeſts his glory in the upper world, where purity and brightneſs are both in perfection; and the vaſt expanſe of the firmament aims to ſpeak the God that dwells there infinite: It is *the firmament of his power*, and of his proſpect too; for from thence *he beholds* all *the children of men.* The divine nature infinitely tranſcends the angelical nature, and God is *above the head of the cherubims*, in reſpect, not only of his dignity above them, but his dominion over them. Cherubims have great power, and wiſdom, and influence, but they are all ſubject to God and Chriſt.

2. He is here upon the throne, or that which had *the appearance of the likeneſs of a throne* (for God's glory and government infinitely tranſcend all the brighteſt ideas our minds can either form or receive concerning them) and it was *as it were a ſapphire-ſtone*, pure and ſparkling; ſuch a throne hath God *prepared in the heavens*, far exceeding the thrones of any earthly potentates.

3. He is here attended with a glorious train of holy angels. When God came into his temple, *the cherubims ſtood on the right ſide of the houſe*, ver. 3. as the prince's life-guard attending the gate of his palace. Chriſt has angels at command. The orders given to all the angels of God are to *worſhip him.* Some obſerve, that they *ſtood on the right ſide of the houſe*, that is, the ſouth-ſide, becauſe on the north-ſide the image of jealouſy was, and other inſtances of idolatry, from which they would place themſelves at as great a diſtance as might be.

4. The appearance of his glory is veiled with a cloud, and yet out of that cloud darts forth a dazzling luſtre; in *the houſe* and *inner court* there was *a cloud*, and darkneſs, which filled them, and yet either the outer court, or the ſame court, after ſome time, *was full of the brightneſs of the Lord's glory*, ver. 3, 4. There was a darting forth of light, and brightneſs; but if any over curious eye pried into it, it would find it ſelf loſt in a cloud. His righteouſneſs is conſpicuous *as the great mountains*, and the brightneſs of it *fills the court*, but *his judgments are a great deep*, which we cannot fathom; *a cloud*, which we cannot ſee through: *The brightneſs* diſcovers enough to awe and direct our conſciences, but the *cloud* forbids us to expect the gratifying of our curioſity; for *we cannot order our ſpeech by reaſon of darkneſs.* Thus, *Hab.* iii. 4. *He had beams coming out of his hand, and yet there was the hiding of his power.* Nothing more clear than that God is, nothing more dark than what he is. God *covers himſelf with light*, and yet, as to us, *makes darkneſs his pavilion.* God took poſſeſſion of the tabernacle and temple in *a cloud*, which was always the ſymbol of his preſence: In the temple above there will be no cloud, but we ſhall *ſee face to face.*

5. The cherubims made a dreadful ſound with their wings, *ver.* 5. The vibration of them, as of the ſtrings of muſical inſtruments, made a curious melody; bees, and other winged inſects, make a noiſe with their wings. Probably, this intimated their preparing to remove, by ſtretching forth and lifting up their wings, which made this noiſe as it were to give warning of it: This noiſe is ſaid to be *as the voice of the almighty God when he ſpeaks*, i. e. as the thunder, which is called *the voice of the Lord*, Pſalm xxix. 3. or, *as the voice of the Lord* when he ſpake to Iſrael on mount Sinai, and therefore he then gave the law with abundance of terror, to ſignify, with what terror he would reckon for the violation of it, which he was now about to do. This noiſe of their *wings was heard even to the outer court*, the court of the people; for the Lord's voice, in his judgments, *cries in the city*, which thoſe may hear that do not, as Ezekiel, ſee the viſions of them.

(2.) The terrible directions of his wrath. This viſion has a further tendency than meerly to ſet forth the divine grandeur, further orders are to be given for the deſtruction of Jeruſalem. The greateſt devaſtations are made by fire and ſword; for a general ſlaughter of the inhabitants of Jeruſalem, orders were given in the foregoing chapter; now here we have a command to lay the city in aſhes, by *ſcattering coals of fire* upon it, which, in the viſion, were fetched *from between the cherubims.*

1. For the iſſuing out of orders to do this, *the glory of the Lord* was lifted *up from the cherub* (as in the chapter before for the giving of orders there, *ver.* 3.) *and ſtood* upon *the threſhold of the houſe*, in imitation of the courts of judgment, which they kept in the gates of their cities. The people would not hear the oracles which God delivered to them from his holy temple, and therefore from thence they ſhall be made to hear their doom.

2. *The man clothed in linen*, who had marked thoſe that were to be preſerved, is to be employed in this ſervice; for *the ſame Jeſus*, that is the Protector and Saviour of them which believe, having *all judgment committed to him*, that of condemnation, as well as that of abſolution, will *come in flaming fire, to take vengeance on thoſe that obey not his goſpel.* He that ſits on the throne calls *to the man clothed in linen* to *go in between the wheels*, — *and fill his hand with coals of fire from between the cherubims, and ſcatter them over the city.* This intimates, 1. That the burning of the city and temple by the Chaldeans, was a conſumption determined, and therein they executed God's counſel, they did what he deſigned before ſhould be done. 2. That the fire of divine wrath, which kindles judgment upon a people, is juſt and holy, for it is fire fetched *from between the cherubims.* The fire on God's altar, where atonement was made, had been ſlighted, to avenge which, fire is here fetched from heaven, like that by which Nadab and Abihu were killed for offering ſtrange fire. If a city, or town, or houſe be burned, whether by deſign or accident, if we trace it in its original, we ſhall find the *coals* that kindled the *fire* came from *between the wheels*; for there is not any evil of that kind in the city, but the Lord has done it. 3. That Jeſus Chriſt acts by commiſſion from the Father, for from him he *receives authority to execute judgment, becauſe he is the Son of man.* Chriſt came to *ſend fire on the earth*, Luke xii. 49. and in the great day will ſpeak this world into aſhes: By *fire* from his hand, the earth, and all the works that are therein, will be burnt up.

3. This *man clothed with linen* readily attended to this ſervice; though, being *clothed with linen*, he was very unfit to go among the

the burning *coals*, yet, being called, he ſaid, *Lo, I come*; this commandment he had received of his Father, and he complied with it; the prophet ſaw him go in, *ver.* 2. *He went in, and ſtood beſide the wheels*, expecting to be furniſhed there with the *coals* he was to *ſcatter*; for what Chriſt was to give, he firſt received, whether for mercy or judgment. He was directed to take fire, but he ſtayed till he had it given him, to ſhew how ſlow he is to execute judgment, and how long-ſuffering to us ward.

4. One of the cherubims reached him a handful of fire from the midſt of the living creatures. The prophet, when he firſt ſaw this viſion, obſerved that there were *burning coals of fire*, and *lamps*, that *went up and down among the living creatures*, chap. i. 13. from thence this fire was taken, *ver.* 7. The *ſpirit of burning*, *the refiner's fire*, by which Chriſt purifies his church, is of a divine original: It is by a celeſtial fire, *fire* from *between the cherubim*, that wonders are wrought. *The cherubim put it into* his *hand*, for the angels are ready to be employed by the Lord Jeſus, and to ſerve all his purpoſes.

5. When he had taken the fire he *went out*, no doubt, to *ſcatter* it up and down upon *the city*, as he was directed. And *who can abide the day of his coming?* Who can ſtand before him when he goes out in his anger?

8. ¶ And there appeared in the cherubims, the form of a mans hand under their wings. 9. And when I looked, behold, the four wheels by the cherubims, one wheel by one cherub, and another wheel by another cherub: and the appearance of the wheels *was* as the colour of a beryl-ſtone. 10. And *as for* their appearances, they four had one likeneſs, as if a wheel had been in the midſt of a wheel. 11. When they went, they went upon their four ſides; they turned not as they went, but to the place whither the head looked, they followed it; they turned not as they went. 12. And their whole body, and their backs, and their hands, and their wings, and the wheels *were* full of eyes round about, *even* the wheels that they four had. 13. As for the wheels, it was cried unto them in my hearing, O wheel. 14. And every one had four faces: the firſt face *was* the face of a cherub, and the ſecond face *was* the face of a man, and the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle. 15. And the cherubims were lifted up: this *is* the living creature that I ſaw by the river of Chebar. 16. And when the cherubims went, the wheels went by them: and when the cherubims lift up their wings, to mount up from the earth, the ſame wheels alſo turned not from beſide them. 17. When they ſtood, *theſe* ſtood; and when they were lifted up, *theſe* lift up themſelves *alſo*: for the ſpirit of the living creature *was* in them. 18. Then the glory of the LORD departed from off the threſhold of the houſe, and ſtood over the cherubims. 19. And the cherubims lift up their wings, and mounted up from the earth in my ſight: when they went out, the wheels alſo *were* beſides them, and *every one* ſtood at the door of the eaſt-gate of the LORDs houſe, and the glory of the God of Iſrael *was* over them above. 20. This *is* the living creature that I ſaw under the God of Iſrael, by the river of Chebar, and I knew that they *were* the cherubims. 21. Every one had four faces apiece, and every one four wings, and the likeneſs of the hands of a man *was* under their wings. 22. And the likeneſs of their faces *was* the ſame faces which I ſaw by the river of Chebar, their appearances and themſelves: they went every one ſtraight forward.

We have here a further account of the viſion of God's glory which Ezekiel ſaw, here intended to introduce that direful omen of the departure of that glory from them, which would open the door for ruin to break in.

1. Ezekiel ſees the glory of God ſhining in the ſanctuary, ſo as he had ſeen it *by the river of Chebar*, and gives an account of it, that they who had by their wickedneſs provoked God to depart from them, might know what they had loſt, and might lament after the Lord, groaning out their Ichabod, *Where is the glory?*

Ezekiel here ſees the operations of divine providence in the government of the lower world, and the affairs of it, repreſented by the *four wheels*; and the perfections of the holy augels, the inhabitants of the upper world, and their miniſtrations, repreſented by the *four living creatures*, every one of which had *four faces*; the agency of the angels in directing the affairs of this world is repreſented by the cloſe communcation that was between the *living creatures* and the *wheels*, the wheels being guided by them in all their motions, as the chariot is by him that drives it; but the ſame Spirit being both in the *living creatures* and in the *wheels*, ſpeaks that infinite wiſdom which ſerves its own purpoſes by the miniſtration of angels, and all the occurrences of this lower world. So that this viſion gives our faith a view of that throne which the Lord has *prepared in the heavens*, and that kingdom of his which *ruleth over all*, Pſal. ciii. 19.

The prophet obſerves, that this was *the ſame viſion* with that he ſaw by the river of Chebar, *ver.* 15, 22. and yet in one thing there ſeems to be a material difference; that that which was there *the face of an ox*, and was *on the left ſide*, chap. i. 10. is here the *face of a cherub*, and is the *firſt face*, ver. 14. whence ſome have concluded, that the peculiar face of a cherub was that of an ox, which the Iſraelites had an eye to when they made the golden calf; I rather think that in this latter viſion the firſt face was the proper appearance or figure of a cherub, which Ezekiel knew very well, being a prieſt, by what he had ſeen in the temple of the Lord, 1 *Kings* vi. 29. but which we now have no certainty of at all; and by this Ezekiel knew aſſuredly, whereas before he only conjectured it, that they were all cherubims, though putting on different faces, *ver.* 20. And this firſt appearing in the proper figure of a cherub, and yet it being needful to retain the number of four, that of the ox is left out and dropped, becauſe the face of the cherubim had been moſt abuſed by the worſhip of an ox. As ſometimes when God appeared to deliver his people, ſo now when he appeared to depart from them, *he rode upon a cherub, and did fly.* Now obſerve here,

1. That this world is ſubject to turns and changes, and various revolutions; the courſe of affairs in it is repreſented by *wheels*, ver. 9. ſometimes one ſpoke is uppermoſt, and ſometimes another, they are ſtill ebbing and flowing like the ſea, waxing and waning like the moon, 1 *Sam.* ii. 4, *&c.* Nay, their appearance is as if there were a *wheel in the midſt of a wheel*, ver. 10. which intimates the mutual references of providences to each other, and their dependences on each other; and the joint tendency of all to one common end, while their motions, as to us, are intricate and perplexed, and ſeemingly contrary.

2. That there is an admirable harmony and uniformity in the various occurrences of providence, *ver.* 13. *as for the wheels*, though they moved ſeveral ways, yet *it was cried to them, O wheel*; they were all as one, being guided by one Spirit to one end, for God works all according to the counſel of his own will, which is one, for his own glory, which is one. And this makes the diſpoſals of providence truly admirable, and to be looked upon with wonder. As the works of his creation, conſiderd ſeparately, were *good*, but all together, *very good*; ſo the wheels of providence, conſidered by themſelves, are wonderful; but put them together, they are very wonderful, *O wheel.*

3. That the motions of providence are ſteady and regular, and whatever the Lord pleaſeth that he doth, and is never put upon new counſels. *The wheels turned not as they went*, ver. 11. and the *living creatures went ſtraight forward*, ver. 22. Whatever difficulties lay in their way, they were ſure to get over them, and were never obliged to ſtand ſtill, turn aſide, or go back. So perfectly known to God are all his works that he is never put upon new counſels.

4. That God makes more uſe of the miniſtration of angels in the government of this lower world than we are aware of. *The four wheels were by the cherubims, one wheel by one cherub, and another wheel by another cherub*, ver. 9. What has been imagined by ſome concerning the ſpheres above, that every orb has its intelligence to guide it, is here intimated concerning the wheels below, that every wheel has its cherub to guide it. We think it a ſatisfaction to us if under the wiſe God there are wiſe men employed in managing the affairs of kingdoms and churches; whether there be ſo or no, it appears by this there are wiſe angels employed, *a cherub to every wheel.*

5. That all the motions of providence, and all the miniſtrations of angels are under the government of the great God: They are all *full of eyes*; thoſe eyes of the Lord which run to and fro through the earth, and which the angels have always an eye to, *ver.* 12. The *living creatures* and *the wheels* concur in their motions and reſts, *ver.* 17. for *the Spirit of life*, as it may be read, or, *the Spirit of the living creatures is in the wheels.* The Spirit of God directs all the creatures, both upper and lower, ſo as to make them ſerve the divine purpoſe. Events are not determined by the *wheel of fortune*, which is blind, but by the *wheels of providence*, which are full of eyes.

2. Ezekiel ſees the glory of God removing out of the ſanctuary, the place where God's honour had long dwelt, and this ſight is as ſad as the other was grateful. It was pleaſant to ſee that God had not *forſaken the earth*, as the idolaters ſuggeſted, *chap.* ix. 9. but ſad to ſee that he was *forſaking his ſanctuary.* The *glory of the Lord ſtood over the threſhold*, ver. 4. But now it *departed from off the threſhold*, having thence given the neceſſary orders for the deſtruction of the city, and it *ſtood over the cherubims*, not thoſe in the moſt holy place, but thoſe that Ezekiel now ſaw in viſion, *ver.* 18, It aſcended that ſtately chariot, as the judge when he comes off the bench goes into his coach and is gone. And immediately *the cherubims lift up their wings*, ver. 19. as they were

were directed, and they *mounted up from the earth*, as birds upon the wing; and *when they went out* the wheels of this chariot were not drawn, but went, by inſtinct, *beſide them*; by which it appeared, that *the ſpirit of the living creatures was in the wheels*. Thus when God is leaving a people in diſpleaſure, angels above, and all events here below, ſhall concur to further his departure. But obſerve here, in the courts of the temple where the people of Iſrael had diſhonoured their God, had caſt off his yoke, and withdrawn the ſhoulder from it, bleſſed angels appear very ready to ſerve him, to draw in his chariot, and to *mount upwards* with it. God has ſhewn the prophet how the will of God was diſobeyed by men on earth, *chap.* viii. here he ſhews him how readily it is obeyed by angels and inferior creatures: and it is a comfort to us when we grieve for the wickedneſs of the wicked, to think how his angels do his commandments, *hearkening to the voice of his word*, Pſal. ciii. 20.

Let us now (1.) Take a view of his chariot in which *the glory of the God of Iſrael rides triumphantly*. He that is the God of Iſrael is the God of heaven and earth, and has the command of all the powers of both. Let the faithful Iſraelites comfort themſelves with this, that he that is their God is above the cherubims, their Redeemer is ſo, 1 *Pet.* iii. 22. and has the ſole and ſovereign diſpoſal of all events, *the living creatures* and *the wheels* agree to ſerve him, ſo that he is *Head over all things to the church*. The Rabbins call this viſion that Ezekiel had, *Mercabah*, the *viſion of the chariot*; and from thence they call the more abſtruſe part of divinity which treats concerning God and ſpirits, *Opus currus, the work of the chariot*, as they do the other part that is more plain and familiar, *Opus bereſhith, the work of the creation*. (2.) Let us attend the motions of this chariot. The *cherubim and the glory of God above them, ſtood at the eaſt gate of the Lord's houſe*, ready to depart and leave the houſe, *ver.* 19. But obſerve with how many ſtops and pauſes God departs, as loth to go, and ſee if there be any that will intercede with him to return. None of the prieſts in the inner court, between the temple and the altar, would court his ſtay, therefore he leaves their court, and ſtands at the *eaſt gate*, which let into the *court of the people*, to ſee if any of them would yet at length ſtand in the gap. Note, God removes by degrees from a provoking people; and when he is ready to depart would return to them, if they were but a repenting, praying people.

CHAP. XI.

This chapter concludes the viſion which Ezekiel ſaw, and this part of it furniſhes him with two meſſages: (1.) A meſſage of wrath againſt thoſe who continued ſtill at Jeruſalem, and were there in the height of preſumption, thinking they ſhould never fall, ver. 1,—13. *(2.) A meſſage of comfort to thoſe who were carried captives into Babylon, and were there in the depth of deſpondency, thinking they ſhould never riſe. And as the former are aſſured that God has judgments in ſtore for them, notwithſtanding their preſent ſecurity; ſo the latter are aſſured, that God has mercy in ſtore for them, notwithſtanding their preſent diſtreſs*, ver. 14,—21. *And ſo the glory of God removes farther*, ver. 22, 23. *The viſion diſappears*, ver. 24. *and Ezekiel faithfully gives his hearers an account of it*, ver. 25.

1. MOreover, the ſpirit lift me up, and brought me unto the eaſt-gate of the LORDs houſe, which looketh eaſtward: and behold, at the door of the gate five and twenty men: among whom I ſaw Jaazaniah the ſon of Azur, and Pelatiah the ſon of Benaiah, princes of the people. 2. Then ſaid he unto me, Son of man, theſe *are* the men that deviſe miſchief, and give wicked counſel in this city: 3. Which ſay, *It is* not near, let us build houſes: this *city is* the caldron, and we *be* the fleſh. 4. ¶ Therefore propheſy againſt them, propheſy, O ſon of man. 5. And the ſpirit of the LORD fell upon me, and ſaid unto me, Speak, Thus ſaith the LORD, Thus have ye ſaid, O houſe of Iſrael: for I know the things that come into your mind, every one of them. 6. Ye have multiplied your ſlain in this city, and ye have filled the ſtreets thereof with the ſlain. 7. Therefore thus ſaith the LORD God, Your ſlain whom ye have laid in the midſt of it, they *are* the fleſh, and this *city is* the caldron: but I will bring you forth out of the midſt of it. 8. Ye have feared the ſword, and I will bring a ſword upon you, ſaith the LORD God. 9. And I will bring you out of the midſt thereof, and deliver you into the hands of ſtrangers, and will execute judgments among you. 10. Ye ſhall fall by the ſword, I will judge you in the border of Iſrael, and ye ſhall know that I *am* the LORD. 11. This *city* ſhall not be your caldron, neither ſhall ye be the fleſh in the midſt thereof; *but* I will judge you in the border of Iſrael. 12. And ye ſhall know that I *am* the LORD: for ye have not walked in my ſtatutes, neither executed my judgments, but have done after the manners of the heathen that *are* round about you. 13. ¶ And it came to paſs when I propheſied, that Pelatiah the ſon of Benaiah died: then fell I down upon my face, and cried with a loud voice, and ſaid, Ah, LORD God, wilt thou make a full end of the remnant of Iſrael?

We have here,

1. The great ſecurity of the princes of Jeruſalem, notwithſtanding the judgments of God that were upon them. The prophet was brought in viſion to the gate of the temple where theſe princes ſat in council upon the preſent arduous affairs of the city; *The Spirit lift me up, and brought me to the eaſt-gate of the Lord's houſe, and behold, twenty five men were there.* See how obſequious the prophet was to the Spirit's orders, and how obſervant of all the diſcoveries that were made to him. It ſhould ſeem theſe twenty five men were not the ſame with thoſe twenty five whom he ſaw at the door of the temple *worſhipping toward the eaſt*, chap. viii. 16. thoſe ſeem to have been prieſts or Levites, for they were between the porch and the altar, but theſe were princes ſitting *in the gate of the Lord's houſe*, to try cauſes, *Jer.* xxvi. 10. and theſe here are charged, not with corruptions in worſhip, but male-adminiſtration in the government; two of them are named, becauſe they were the moſt leading active men, and, perhaps, becauſe the prophet knew them, though he had been ſome years abſent; Jaazaniah, not that mentioned *chap.* viii. 11. for he was the ſon of Shaphan, this is the *ſon of Azur*. Some tell us that Jeruſalem was divided into twenty four wards, and that theſe were the governours, or aldermen, of thoſe wards, with their mayor, or preſident. Now obſerve,

(1.) The general character which God gives of theſe men to the prophet, *ver.* 2. *Theſe are the men that deviſe miſchief*; under pretence of concerting meaſures for the publick ſafety, they harden people in their ſins, and take off their fear of God's judgments which they are threatened with by the prophets; they *give wicked counſel in this city*, counſelling them to reſtrain and ſilence the prophets, to rebel againſt the king of Babylon, and to reſolve upon holding *the city* out to the laſt extremity. Note, It is bad with a people when the things that belong to their peace are hid from the eyes of thoſe who are intruſted with their counſels. And when miſchief is done, God knows at whoſe door to lay it; and, in the day of diſcovery and recompence, will be ſure to lay it at the right door, and will ſay, *Theſe are the men that deviſed it*, though they are great men, and paſs for wiſe men, and muſt not now be contradicted or controlled.

(2.) The particular charge exhibited againſt them in proof of this character. They are indited for words ſpoken at their council-board, which he that *ſtands in the congregation of the mighty* would take cognizance of, *ver.* 3. they ſaid to this effect, *It is not near*, the deſtruction of our city, that has been ſo often threatened by the prophets, *is not near*; not ſo near as they talk of: they are conſcious to themſelves of ſuch an enmity to reformation, that they cannot but conclude it will come at laſt: but they have ſuch an opinion of God's patience (though they have long abuſed it) that they are willing to hope it will not come this great while. Note, Where Satan cannot perſwade men to look upon the judgment to come as a thing doubtful and uncertain, yet he gains his point by perſwading them to look upon it as a thing at a diſtance, ſo that it loſes its force. If it be ſure, yet *it is not near*, whereas in truth, *the judge ſtands before the door*.

Now if the deſtruction is not near, they conclude, *Let us build houſes*; let us count upon a continuance, for *this city is the caldron, and we are the fleſh*. This ſeems to be a proverbial expreſſion, ſignifying no more but this, we are as ſafe in this city as fleſh in a boiling pot; the walls of the city ſhall be to us as *walls of braſs*, and ſhall receive no more damage by the beſiegers about it, than the *caldron* doth by *the fire under it*. Thoſe that think to force us out of our city into captivity, it will be as much at their peril, as it would be to take the fleſh out of a boiling pot with their hands. This appears to be the meaning of it, by the anſwer God gives to it, *ver.* 9. *I will bring you out of the midſt of the city*, where you think your ſelves ſafe, and then it will appear, *ver.* 11. that *this is not your caldron, neither are you the fleſh*. Perhaps, it has a particular reference to *the fleſh of the peace-offerings*, which it was ſo great an offence for the prieſts themſelves to take out of the *caldron* while it was in ſeething, as we find 1 *Sam.* ii. 13, 14. and then it intimates, that they were the more ſecure becauſe Jeruſalem was the holy city, and they thought themſelves a holy people in it, not to be meddled with. Some think this was a banter upon Jeremiah, who in one of his firſt viſions ſaw Jeruſalem repreſented by a *ſeething pot*, Jer. i. 13. now, ſay they, in a way of jeſt and ridicule, if it be a ſeething pot we are as the fleſh in it, and who dares meddle with us? Thus they continued mocking the meſſengers of the Lord, even while they ſuffered for ſo doing; but *be ye not mockers leſt your bands be made ſtrong*. Thoſe hearts are hard indeed which are made more ſecure

ſecure by thoſe words of God which were deſigned for warning to them.

2. The method taken to awaken them out of their ſecurity. One would think the providences of God, that were concerning them, were enough to ſtartle them; but to help them to underſtand and improve thoſe, the word of God is ſent them to give them warning, *ver.* 4. *Therefore propheſy againſt them*, and try to undeceive them, *propheſy, O ſon of man*, upon theſe dead and dry bones. Note, The greateſt kindneſs miniſters can do to ſecure ſinners is to preach againſt them, and to ſhew them their miſery and danger though they are never ſo unwilling to ſee it. We then act moſt for them, when we appear moſt againſt them. But the prophet being at a loſs what to ſay to men that were hardened in ſin, and bid defiance to the judgments of God, *the Spirit of the Lord fell upon him*, to make him full of power and courage, and *ſaid unto him, Speak.* Note, When ſinners are flattering themſelves into their own ruin it is time to *ſpeak*, and to tell them they ſhall have no peace if they go on. Miniſters are ſometimes ſo baſhful and timorous, and ſo much at a loſs, that they muſt be put on to ſpeak, and to ſpeak boldly. But he that commands the prophet to ſpeak, gives him inſtructions what to ſay; and he muſt addreſs himſelf to them as *the houſe of Iſrael*, ver. 5. for not the princes only, but all the people were concerned to know the truth of their cauſe, to know the worſt of it. They are the *houſe of Iſrael*, and therefore the *God of Iſrael* is concerned, in kindneſs to them, to give them warning; and they are concerned, in duty to him, to take the warning.

And what is it he muſt ſay to them in God's name?

1. Let them know, That the God of heaven takes notice of their vain confidences with which they ſupport themſelves, *ver.* 5. *I know the things that come into your minds every one of them*, what ſecret reaſons you have for theſe reſolutions, and what you aim at in putting ſo good a face upon a matter you know to be bad. Note, God perfectly knows not only the things that come out of our mouths, but the things that come into our minds; not only all we ſay, but all we think; even thoſe thoughts that are moſt ſuddenly darted into our minds, and as ſuddenly ſlip out of them again, ſo that we ourſelves are ſcarce aware of them, yet God knows them; he knows us better than we know ourſelves; *He underſtands our thoughts afar off:* the conſideration whereof ſhould oblige us to keep our hearts with all diligence, that no vain thoughts come into them, or lodge within them.

2. Let them know, That all that had fallen, or ſhould yet fall in Jeruſalem, by the ſword of the Chaldeans, they that adviſed to ſtand it out, ſhould be accounted before God the murtherers of them; and thoſe ſlain were the only ones that ſhould *remain in the city*, as the *fleſh in the caldron*, ver. 6. *you have multiplied your ſlain in the city*, not only thoſe whom you have by the ſword of juſtice unjuſtly put to death, under colour of law, but thoſe whom you have by your wilfulneſs and pride unwiſely expoſed to the ſword of war, though you were told by the prophets you ſhould certainly go by the worſt. Thus you, with your ſtubborn humour, have *filled the ſtreets of Jeruſalem with the ſlain.* Note, Thoſe who are either unrighteous or imprudent in beginning or carrying on a war bring upon themſelves a great deal of the guilt of blood; and thoſe who are ſlain in the battles or ſieges which they, by ſuch a reaſonable peace as the war aimed at, might have prevented, will be called *their ſlain.* Now theſe ſlain are the only fleſh that ſhall be left in this *caldron*, ver. 7. There ſhall none remain to keep poſſeſſion of the city, but thoſe that are buried in it. There ſhall be no inhabitants of Jeruſalem but the inhabitants of the graves there, no freemen of the city but the free among the dead.

3. Let them know, That how impregnable ſoever they thought their city to be, they ſhould be forced out of it, either driven to flight, or dragged into captivity: *I will bring you forth out of the midſt of it*, whether you will or no, *ver.* 7. and again, *ver.* 9. They had provoked God to forſake the city, and thought they ſhould do well enough by their own policy and ſtrength when he was gone; but God will make them know, that there is no peace to them that have left their God. If they have, by their ſins, driven God from his houſe, he will ſoon, by his judgments, drive them from theirs: and it will be found that thoſe are leaſt ſafe that are moſt ſecure. This city ſhall not be your *caldron, neither ſhall ye be the fleſh*, you ſhall not ſoke away in it, as you promiſe yourſelves, and die in your neſt; you think yourſelves ſafe *in the midſt thereof*, but you ſhall not be long there.

4. Let them know, That when God has got them out of the midſt of Jeruſalem, he will purſue them with his judgments wherever he finds them; the judgments which they thought to ſhelter themſelves from, by keeping cloſe in Jeruſalem. They feared the ſword if they ſhould go out to the Chaldeans, and therefore would abide in their *caldron*; but ſaith God, I will *bring a ſword upon you*, ver. 8. and *you ſhall fall by the ſword*, ver. 10. Note, The fear of the wicked it ſhall come upon him. And there is no fence againſt the judgments of God when they come with commiſſion, no not in walls of braſs. They were afraid of truſting to the mercy of ſtrangers: but, ſaith God, *I will deliver you into the hands of ſtrangers*, whoſe reſentments you ſhall feel, ſince you were not willing to lie at their mercy; ſee *Jer.* xxxviii. 17, 18. They thought to eſcape the judgments of God, but God ſaith he will *execute judgments upon them:* and whereas they reſolved, if they muſt be judged, it ſhould be in Jeruſalem, God tells them, *ver.* 10. and again, *ver.* 11. he will judge them *in the borders of Iſrael*, which was fulfilled when Nebuchadnezzar ſlew all the nobles of Judah at Riblah in the land of Hamath, on the utmoſt border of the land of Canaan. Note, Thoſe who have taken never ſo deep root in the place where they live, yet cannot be ſure that in that place they ſhall die.

5. Let them know, That all this is the due puniſhment of their ſin, and *the revelation of the righteous judgment of God* againſt them. *Ye ſhall know that I am the Lord*, ver. 10. and again, *ver.* 12. Thoſe ſhall be made to know by the ſword of the Lord, that would not be taught by his word, what a hatred he has to ſin, and what a fearful thing it is for impenitent ſinners to fall into his hands. *I will execute judgments*, and then you ſhall *know that I am the Lord*, for the Lord is known by the judgments which he executeth, upon thoſe *that have not walked in his ſtatutes.* Hereby it is known that he made the law, becauſe he puniſheth the breach of it. *I will execute judgments among you*, ſaith God, becauſe *you have not executed my judgments*, ver. 12. Note, The executing of the judgments of God's mouth by us, in a uniform, ſteady courſe of obedience to his law, is the only way to prevent the executing of the judgments of his hand upon us in our ruin and confuſion; one way or other God's judgments will be executed; the law will take place either in its precept or in its penalty. If we do not give honour to God by executing his judgments as he has commanded, he will *get him honour* upon us, by executing his judgments, as he has threatened: and thus we ſhall know that he is the Lord, the ſovereign Lord of all, that will not be mocked. And obſerve, When they caſt off God's *ſtatutes*, and walked not in them, they did *after the manners of the heathen that were round about them*, and introduced into their worſhip all their impure, ridiculous, and barbarous uſages. When men leave the ſettled rule of divine inſtitutions, they wander endleſly. Juſtly therefore was this made the reaſon why they ſhould *keep God's ordinances*, that they might not *commit the abominable cuſtoms of the heathen*, Lev. xviii. 30.

3. This awakening word is immediately here followed by an awakening providence, *ver.* 13. Where we may obſerve,

1. With what power Ezekiel propheſied, or rather, what a divine power went along with it; *It came to paſs when I propheſied, that Pelatiah the ſon of Benaiah died*; who was mentioned *ver.* 1. as a principal man among the twenty five princes that made all the miſchief in Jeruſalem. It ſhould ſeem, this was done in viſion now, as the ſlaying of the ancient men, *chap.* ix. 6. upon occaſion of which Ezekiel prayed, *ver.* 8. as he did here; but it was an aſſurance, that when this prophecy ſhould be publiſhed it ſhould be done in fact. The death of Pelatiah was an earneſt of the compleat accompliſhment of this prophecy. Note, God is pleaſed oftentimes to ſingle out ſome ſinners, and to make them monuments of his juſtice, for warning to others of what is coming: and ſome that thought themſelves very ſafe are ſnatched away ſuddenly, and drop down dead in an inſtant; as Ananias and Sapphira at Peter's feet, when he propheſied.

2. With what pity Ezekiel prayed. Though the ſudden death of Pelatiah was a confirmation of Ezekiel's prophecy, and really an honour to him, yet he was in a mighty concern about it, and laid it to heart, as if he had been his relation or friend: *He fell on his face, and cried with a loud voice*, as one in earneſt; *Ah, Lord God, wilt thou make a full end of the remnant of Iſrael?* Many are ſwept away by the judgments we have been under, and ſhall the remnant which have eſcaped the ſword die thus by the immediate hand of heaven? Then thou wilt indeed make a full end. Perhaps it was Ezekiel's infirmity to bewail the death of this wicked prince thus, as it was Samuel's to mourn ſo long for Saul; but thus he ſhewed how far he was from deſiring the woful day he foretold. David lamented the ſickneſs of thoſe that hated and perſecuted him. And we ought to be much affected with the ſudden death of others, yea, though they are wicked.

14. Again the word of the LORD came unto me, ſaying, 15. Son of man, thy brethren, *even* thy brethren, the men of thy kindred, and all the houſe of Iſrael wholly *are* they, unto whom the inhabitants of Jeruſalem have ſaid, Get ye far from the LORD: unto us is this land given in poſſeſſion. 16. Therefore ſay, Thus ſaith the LORD God, Although I have caſt them far off among the heathen, and although I have ſcattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little ſanctuary in the countries where they ſhall come. 17. Therefore ſay, Thus ſaith the LORD God, I will even gather you from the people, and aſſemble you out of the countries where ye have been ſcattered, and I will give you the land of Iſrael.

18. And they shall come thither, and they shall take away all the detestable things thereof, and all the abominations thereof from thence. 19. And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh: 20. That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God. 21. But *as for them* whose heart walketh after the heart of their detestable things, and their abominations, I will recompence their way upon their own heads, saith the LORD God.

Prophecy was designed that by it *every valley might be exalted*, as well as *every mountain and hill brought low*, Isa. xl. 4. and prophets were to speak not only conviction to the presumptuous and secure, but comfort to the despised and desponding, that trembled at God's word. The prophet having, in the former part of this chapter, received instructions for the awakening of those that were *at ease in Zion*, is, in these verses, furnished with comfortable words for those that mourned in Babylon, and *by the rivers* there sat *weeping*, when they *remembered Zion*. Observe,

1. How the pious captives were trampled upon and insulted over by those who continued in Jerusalem, *ver.* 15. God tells the prophet what the inhabitants of Jerusalem said of him and the rest of them that were already carried away to Babylon; God had owned them as *good figs*, and declared it was for their good that he had sent them into Babylon, but the inhabitants of Jerusalem abandoned them, supposing them that were really the best saints to be the greatest sinners of all men that dwelt in Jerusalem. Observe, (1.) How they are described; they are *thy brethren*, saith God to the prophet, whom thou hast a concern and affection for, they are *the men of thy kindred*; *the men of thy redemption*, so the word is; thy next of kin, to whom the right of redeeming the alienated possession doth belong, but who are so far from being able to do it, that they are themselves gone into captivity: They are *the whole house of Israel*, God so accounts of them, because they only have retained their integrity, and are bettered by their captivity. They are not only of the same family and nation with Ezekiel, but of the same spirit, they were his hearers, and he had communion with them in holy ordinances; and, perhaps, upon that account they are called *his brethren, and the men of his kindred*. (2.) How they were disowned by *the inhabitants of Jerusalem*, they said of them, *Get ye far from the Lord*. They that were *at ease* and *proud* themselves scorned their brethren that were *humbled* and under humbling providences. 1. They cut them off from being members of their church; because they had separated themselves from their rulers, and in compliance with the will of God had surrendered themselves to the king of Babylon, they excommunicated them, and said, *Get ye far from the Lord*, we will have nothing to do with you; those that were superstitious were very willing to shake off those that were conscientious, and were severe in their censures of them, and sentences against them, as if they were forsaken and forgotten of the Lord, and were cut off from the communion of the faithful. 2. They cut them off from being members of the commonwealth too, as if they had no longer any part or lot in the matter; *unto us is the land given in possession*, and you have forfeited your estates by surrendering to the king of Babylon, and we are thereby become entitled to them: God takes notice of, and is much displeased with, the contempt which those that are in prosperity put upon their brethren that are in affliction.

2. The gracious promises which God made to them, in consideration of the insolent carriage of their brethren towards them. They that hated them and cast them out, said, *Let the Lord be glorified*, but *he shall appear to their joy*, Isa. lxvi. 5. God owns that his hand was gone out against them, which had given occasion to their brethren to triumph over them, *ver.* 16. it is true, *I have cast them far off among the heathen*, and *scattered them among the countries*, they look as if they were an abandoned people, and so mingled with the nations as that they would be lost among them, but I have mercy in store for them. Note, God takes occasion from the contempts which are put upon his people to speak comfort to them; as David hoped God would reward him good for Shimei's cursing. His time to support his peoples hopes is, when their enemies are endeavouring to drive them to despair. Now God promiseth,

(1.) That he will make up to them the want of the temple, and the privileges of it, *ver.* 16. *I will be to them as a little sanctuary, in the countries where they shall come.* They at Jerusalem have the temple, but without God; they in Babylon have God, though without the temple. 1. God *will be a sanctuary to them*, i. e. a place of refuge; to him they shall flee, and in him they shall be safe, as he was that took hold on *the horns of the altar*. Or rather, they shall have such communion with God in the land of their captivity, as it was thought could be had no where but in the temple: They shall there *see God's power and his glory*, so as they used *to see it in the sanctuary*: They shall have the tokens of God's presence with them, and his grace in their hearts shall sanctify their prayers and praises, as well as ever the altar sanctified the gift, so that they shall *please the Lord better than an ox or bullock*. 2. He *will be a little sanctuary*, not seen or observed by their enemies, who looked with an evil and envious eye upon *that house* at Jerusalem which was *high and great*, 1 Kings ix. 8. They were but few and mean, and *a little sanctuary* was fittest for them; God *regards the low estate of his* people, and suits his favours to their circumstances. Observe the condescensions of divine grace; *the great God will be to* his people *a little sanctuary*. Note, They that are deprived of the benefit of publick ordinances, if it be not their own fault, may have the want of them abundantly made up in the immediate communications of divine grace and comforts.

(2.) That God would in due time put an end to their afflictions, bring them out of the land of their captivity, and settle them again, them or their children, in their own land, *ver.* 17. *I will gather* even *you* that are thus dispersed, thus despised, and given over for lost by your own countrymen; *I will gather you from the people*, distinguish you from those with whom you are mingled, deliver you from those by whom you are held captives, *and assemble you* in a body out of the countries *where you have been scattered*; you shall not come back one by one, but all together, which will make your return more honourable, safe, and comfortable; and then *I will give you the land of Israel*, which now your brethren look upon you as for ever shut out from. Note, It is well for us that mens severe censures cannot cut us off from God's gracious promises. There are many that will be found to have a place in the holy land, whom uncharitable men, by their monopolies of it to themselves, had secluded from it. *I will give you the land of Israel*, give it you again by a new grant, *and they shall come thither*. If there be any thing in the change of the person from you to them, it may signify the posterity of those to whom the promise is made: *You* shall have the title as the patriarchs had, and *they* that come after shall have the possession.

(3.) That God, by his grace, would part between them and their sins, *ver.* 18. Their captivity shall effectually cure them of their idolatry; when *they come thither* to their own land again, *they shall take away all the detestable things thereof*. Their idols, that had been their delectable things, should now be looked upon with detestation; not only the idols of Babylon, where they were captives, but the idols of Canaan, where they were natives; they should not only not worship them as they had done, but they should not suffer any monuments of them to remain; *they shall take all the abominations thereof from thence*. Note, Then it is in mercy that we return to a prosperous estate, when we return not to the sins and follies of that state: *What have I to do any more with idols?*

(4.) That God would powerfully dispose them to their duty; they shall not only *cease to do evil*, but they shall *learn to do well*; because there shall be not only an end of their troubles, but a return to their peace.

1. God will plant good principles in them; he will make the tree good, *ver.* 19. This is a gospel promise, and is made good to all those whom God designs for the heavenly Canaan; for God prepares all for heaven, whom he has prepared heaven for. It is promised, 1. That God *will give them one heart*, i. e. a heart entire for the true God, and not divided as it had been among many gods; a heart firmly fixed and resolved for God, and not wavering; steady and uniform, and not inconstant with it self: *One heart* is a sincere and upright heart, its intentions of a piece with its professions. 2. That he *will put a new spirit within them*, a temper of mind agreeable to the new circumstances which God in his providence would bring them into. All that are sanctified have *a new spirit*, quite different from what it was; they act from new principles, walk by new rules, and aim at new ends. A new name or a new face will not serve without *a new spirit*. *If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.* 3. That he *will take* away *the stony heart out of their flesh*, out of their corrupt nature. Their hearts shall no longer be, as they have been, dead and dry, and hard and heavy as a stone; no longer uncapable of bearing good fruit, so that the good seed is lost upon it, as it was on the *stony ground*. 4. That he *will give them a heart of flesh*, not dead, or proud flesh, but living flesh; he will make their hearts sensible of spiritual pains, and spiritual pleasures; will make them tender, and apt to receive impressions; this is God's work, it is his gift, his gift by promise; and a wonderful and happy change it is that is wrought by it, from death to life. This is promised to those whom God would bring back to their own land, for then such a change of the condition is for the better indeed, when it is accompanied with such a change of the heart; and such a change must be wrought in all those that shall be brought to the *better country*, that is, the heavenly.

2. Their practices shall be consonant to these principles; *I will give them a new spirit*, not that they may be able to discourse well of religion, and to dispute for it, but *that they may walk in my statutes*, in their whole conversation, *and keep mine ordinances*, in all acts of religious worship, *ver.* 20. These two must go together, and

and thoſe, to whom God has given *a new heart, and a new ſpirit*, will make conſcience of both; and then, *they ſhall be my people, and I will be their God:* The ancient covenant which ſeemed to have been broken and forgotten ſhall be renewed. By their idolatry it ſhould ſeem they had caſt God off, by their captivity it ſhould ſeem God had caſt them off; but when they were cured of their idolatry, and delivered out of their captivity, God and his Iſrael own one another again: God, by his good work in them, will make them his *people*, and then, by the tokens of his good will towards them, he will ſhew that he is *their God*.

3. Here is a threatning of wrath againſt thoſe who hated to be reformed. As, when judgments are threatned, the righteous are diſtinguiſhed ſo as not to ſhare in the evil of thoſe judgments; ſo, when favours are promiſed, the wicked are diſtinguiſhed ſo as not to ſhare in the comfort of thoſe favours; they have no part or lot in the matter, *ver.* 21. *But as for them* that have no grace, what have they *to do with peace?* Obſerve, 1. Their deſcription; their *heart walks after the heart of their deteſtable things*; they have as great a mind to worſhip devils, as devils have to be worſhipped: Or, in oppoſition to the *new heart* which God gives his people, which is a heart after his own heart, they have a *heart after the heart of their* idols, *i. e.* in their temper and practice they conformed themſelves to the characters and accounts given them of their idols, and the ideas they have of them, and of them they learned lewdneſs and cruelty. Here lies the root of all their wickedneſs, the corruption of the heart; as the root of their reformation is laid in the renovation of the heart. The heart has its walks, and according as thoſe are the man is. 2. Their doom; it carries both juſtice and terror in it; *I will recompenſe their way upon their own heads*, i. e. I will deal with them as they deſerve. There needs no more than this to ſpeak God righteous, that he doth but render to men according to their deſerts: And yet ſuch are the deſerts of ſin, that there needs no more than this to ſpeak the ſinner miſerable.

22. ¶ Then did the cherubims lift up their wings, and the wheels beſides them; and the glory of the God of Iſrael *was* over them above. 23. And the glory of the LORD went up from the midſt of the city, and ſtood upon the mountain, which *is* on the eaſt-ſide of the city. 24. ¶ Afterwards the ſpirit took me up, and brought me in viſion by the ſpirit of God into Chaldea, to them of the captivity: ſo the viſion that I had ſeen went up from me. 25. Then I ſpake unto them of the captivity, all the things that the LORD had ſhewed me.

Here is, 1. The departure of God's preſence from the city and temple. When the meſſage was committed to the prophet, and he was fully apprized of it, fully inſtructed how to ſeparate between *the precious and the vile, then the cherubims lift up their wings, and the wheels beſides them*, ver. 22. as before, *chap.* x. 19. Angels, when they have done their errands in this lower world, are upon the wing to be gone, for they loſe no time. We left *the glory of the Lord* laſt at *the eaſt-gate of the temple*, chap. x. 19. which is here ſaid to be in *the midſt of the city:* Now here we are told, that, finding and wondering that there was none to intercede, none to uphold, none to invite its return, it removed next to *the mountain, which is on the eaſt-ſide of the city*, ver. 23. that was *the mount of Olives*. On that mountain they had ſet up their idols, to confront God in his temple, when he dwelt there, 1 *Kings* xi. 7. and thence it was called *the mount of corruption*, 2 Kings xxiii. 13. therefore there God doth as it were ſet up his ſtandard, his tribunal; as it were to confront them, who thought to keep poſſeſſion of the temple for themſelves now God had left it. From that mountain there was a full proſpect of the city, thither God removed, to make good what he had ſaid, *Deut.* xxxii. 20. *I will hide my face from them, I will ſee what their end ſhall be.* It was from this mountain that Chriſt *beheld the city, and wept over* it, in the foreſight of its laſt deſtruction by the Romans. *The glory of the Lord* removed thither, to be as it were yet within call, and ready to return, if now at length, *in this their day*, they would have *underſtood the things that belonged to their peace.* Loth to depart bids oft farewel; God, by going away thus ſlowly, thus gradually, intimated, that he left them with reluctancy, and would not have gone if they had not perfectly forced him from them. He did now, in effect, ſay, *How ſhall I give thee up, Ephraim? how ſhall I deliver thee, Iſrael?* But though he bear long, he will not bear always, but will at length forſake thoſe, and caſt them off for ever, who have forſaken him, and caſt him off.

2. The departure of this viſion from the prophet; at length it *went up from* him, *ver.* 24. he ſaw it mount upwards, till it went out of ſight, which would be a confirmation to his faith that it was a heavenly viſion, that it deſcended from above, for thitherwards it returned. Note, The viſions which the ſaints have of the glory of God, will not be conſtant till they come to heaven. They have glimpſes of that glory, which they ſoon loſe again; viſions which go *up from* them; taſtes of divine pleaſures, but not a continual feaſt. It was from *the mount of Olives* that *the viſion went up*, typifying the aſcenſion of Chriſt to heaven from that very mountain, when thoſe that had ſeen him *manifeſted in the fleſh*, ſaw him no more. It was foretold, *Zech.* xiv. 4. that *his feet ſhould ſtand upon the mount of Olives*, ſtand faſt there.

3. The prophet's return to them of the captivity; the ſame ſpirit that had carried him in a trance or ecſtaſy to Jeruſalem, brought him back to Chaldea, for there the bounds of his habitation are at preſent appointed, and that is the place of his ſervice. The ſpirit came to him, not to deliver him out of captivity, but (which was equivalent) to ſupport and comfort him in his captivity.

4. The account which he gave to his hearers of all he had ſeen and heard, *ver.* 25. He received that he might give, and he was *faithful to him that appointed him:* He delivered his meſſage very honeſtly; he *ſpake all that*, and that only, which God *had ſhewed* him: He told them of the great wickedneſs he had ſeen at Jeruſalem, and the ruin that was haſtening towards that city, that they might not repent of their ſurrendering themſelves to the king of Babylon, as Jeremiah adviſed them, and blame themſelves for it, nor envy thoſe that ſtayed behind, and laughed at them for going when they did, nor wiſh themſelves there again, but be content in their captivity. Who would covet to be in a city ſo full of ſin, and ſo near to ruin? It is better be in Babylon under the favour of God, than in Jeruſalem under his wrath and curſe. But though this was delivered immediately to them of the captivity, yet we may ſuppoſe they ſent the contents of it to them at Jeruſalem, with whom they kept up a correſpondence; and well had it been for Jeruſalem, if ſhe had taken the warning hereby given.

CHAP. XII.

Though the viſion of God's glory be gone up from the prophet, yet his word comes to him ſtill, and is by him ſent to the people, and to the ſame purpoſe with that which was diſcovered to him in the viſion, namely, to ſet forth the terrible judgments that were coming upon Jeruſalem, by which the city and temple ſhould be entirely laid waſte. In this chapter, 1. *The prophet, by removing his ſtuff, and quitting his lodgings, muſt be a ſign to ſet forth Zedekiah's flight out of Jeruſalem in the utmoſt confuſion, when the Chaldeans took the city,* ver. 1,—16. 2. *The prophet, by eating his meat with trembling, muſt be a ſign to ſet forth the famine in the city, during the ſiege, and the conſternation that the inhabitants ſhould be in,* ver. 17,—20. 3. *A meſſage is ſent from God to the people, to aſſure them, that all theſe predictions ſhould have their accompliſhment very ſhortly, and not be deferred, as they flattered themſelves with hopes they would,* ver. 21,—28.

1. THE word of the LORD alſo came unto me, ſaying, 2. Son of man, thou dwelleſt in the midſt of a rebellious houſe, which have eyes to ſee, and ſee not; they have ears to hear, and hear not: for they *are* a rebellious houſe. 3. Therefore thou ſon of man, prepare thee ſtuff for removing, and remove by day in their ſight, and thou ſhalt remove from thy place to another place in their ſight; it may be they will conſider, though they *be* a rebellious houſe. 4. Then ſhalt thou bring forth thy ſtuff by day in their ſight, as ſtuff for removing: and thou ſhalt go forth at even in their ſight, as they that go forth into captivity. 5. Dig thou through the wall in their ſight, and carry out thereby. 6. In their ſight ſhalt thou bear *it* upon *thy* ſhoulders, *and* carry *it* forth in the twilight: thou ſhalt cover thy face that thou ſee not the ground: for I have ſet thee *for* a ſign unto the houſe of Iſrael. 7. And I did ſo as I was commanded: I brought forth my ſtuff by day, as ſtuff for captivity, and in the even I digged through the wall with mine hand, I brought *it* forth in the twilight, *and* I bare *it* upon *my* ſhoulder in their ſight. 8. ¶ And in the morning came the word of the LORD unto me, ſaying, 9. Son of man, hath not the houſe of Iſrael, the rebellious houſe, ſaid unto thee, What doſt thou? 10. Say thou unto them, Thus ſaith the LORD God, This burthen *concerneth* the prince in Jeruſalem, and all the houſe of Iſrael that *are* among them. 11. Say, I *am* your ſign: like as I have done, ſo ſhall it be done unto them: they ſhall remove *and* go into captivity. 12. And the prince that *is* among them ſhall bear upon *his* ſhoulder in the twilight, and ſhall go forth: they ſhall dig through the wall to carry out thereby: he ſhall cover his face that he ſee not the ground with *his* eyes. 13. My net alſo

alſo will I ſpread upon him, and he ſhall be taken in my ſnare; and I will bring him to Babylon *to* the land of the Chaldeans, yet ſhall he not ſee it, though he ſhall die there. 14. And I will ſcatter toward every wind all that *are* round about him to help him, and all his bands, and I will draw out the ſword after them. 15. And they ſhall know that I *am* the LORD, when I ſhall ſcatter them among the nations, and diſperſe them in the countries. 16. But I will leave a few men of them from the ſword, from the famine, and from the peſtilence, that they may declare all their abominations among the heathen whither they come, and they ſhall know that I *am* the LORD.

Perhaps, Ezekiel reflected with ſo much pleaſure upon the viſion he had had of the glory of God, that often, ſince it went up from him, he was wiſhing it might come down to him again, and, he having ſeen it once, and a ſecond time, was willing to hope he might be a third time ſo favoured; but we do not find that he ever ſaw it any more; and yet *the word of the Lord comes to* him; for God did *in divers manners ſpeak to the fathers*, Heb. i. 1. and they often *heard the words of God*, when they did not *ſee the viſions of the Almighty*. Faith comes by hearing that word of prophecy, which is more ſure than viſion: We may keep up our communion with God without raptures and ecſtaſies.

In theſe verſes the prophet is directed,

1. By what ſigns and actions to expreſs the approaching captivity of Zedekiah king of Judah; that was the thing to be foretold; and it is foretold to them that are already in captivity, becauſe as long as Zedekiah was upon the throne, they flattered themſelves with hopes that he would make his part good with the king of Babylon, whoſe yoke he was now projecting to ſhake off; from which, it is probable, theſe poor captives promiſe themſelves mighty matters, and, it may be, when he was forming that deſign, he privately ſent encouragement to them to hope, that he would reſcue them ſhortly, or procure their liberty by exchange of priſoners; and while they were fed with theſe vain hopes, they could not ſet themſelves either to ſubmit to their affliction, or to get good by their affliction: It was therefore neceſſary, but very difficult, to convince them, that Zedekiah, inſtead of being their deliverer, ſhould very ſhortly be their fellow-ſufferer. Now, one would have thought, it might have been ſufficient if the prophet had only told them this in God's name, as he doth afterwards, *ver.* 10. but, to prepare them for the prophecy of it, he muſt firſt give them a ſign of it; muſt ſpeak it to their eyes firſt, and then their ears: And here we have,

(1.) The reaſon why he muſt take this method, *ver.* 2. it is becauſe they are a ſtupid, dull, unthinking people, that will not heed, or will ſoon forget, or, at leaſt, will not be at all affected with what they only hear of, it will make no impreſſion at all upon them; *thou dwelleſt in the midſt of a rebellious houſe*, whom it is next to impoſſible to work any good upon; *they have eyes and ears*, they have intellectual powers and faculties, but they *ſee not*, they *hear not*; they were idolaters, whoſe character it was, that they were like the idols they worſhipped, which *have eyes and ſee not, ears and hear not*, Pſalm cxv. 5, 8. Note, Thoſe are to be reckoned rebellious that ſhut their eyes againſt the divine light, and ſtop their ears to the divine law. They that are wilfully ignorant, that have faculties and means, and will not uſe them, their ignorance is ſo far from being their excuſe, that it adds rebellion to their ſin: None ſo blind, ſo deaf, as thoſe that will not hear, that will not ſee. They *ſee not*, they *hear not*; *for they are a rebellious houſe*. The cauſe is all from themſelves; the darkneſs of the underſtanding is owing to the ſtubbornneſs of the will. Now this is the reaſon why he muſt ſpeak to them by ſigns, as deaf people are taught, that they might be either inſtructed or aſhamed. Note, Miniſters muſt accommodate themſelves, not only to the weakneſs, but to the wilfulneſs of thoſe they deal with, and deal with them accordingly: If they dwell among thoſe that are rebellious, they muſt ſpeak to them the more plainly and preſſingly, and take that courſe that is moſt likely to work upon them, that they may be left inexcuſable.

(2.) The method he muſt take to awaken and affect them; he muſt furniſh himſelf with all neceſſaries *for removing*, ver. 3. provide for a journey, clothes and money; he muſt *remove from one place to another*, as one unſettled, and forced to ſhift; this he muſt do *by day, in the ſight* of the people; he muſt bring out all his houſhold goods, to be packed up, and ſent away, *ver.* 4. and, becauſe all the doors and gates were either locked up, that they could not paſs through them, or ſo guarded by the enemy, that they durſt not, he muſt therefore *dig through the wall*, and convey his goods away clandeſtinely through that breach in the wall, *ver.* 5. He muſt carry his goods away himſelf upon his own ſhoulders, for want of a ſervant to attend him; he muſt do this *in the twilight*, that he might not be diſcovered; and, when he has made what ſhift he can to ſecure ſome of the beſt of his effects, he muſt himſelf ſteal away *at even in their ſight*, with fear and trembling, and muſt go *as they that go forth into captivity*, ver. 4. that is, he muſt *cover* his *face*, ver. 6. as being aſhamed to be ſeen, and afraid to be known; or in token of very great ſorrow and concern: He muſt go away as a poor broken tradeſman, that, when he is forced to ſhut up ſhop, hides his head, or runs his country.

Thus Ezekiel muſt be himſelf a ſign to them; and when, perhaps, he ſeemed ſomewhat backward to put himſelf to all this trouble, and to expoſe himſelf to be bantered and ridiculed for it, to reconcile him to it, God ſaith, *ver.* 3. *It may be they will conſider*, and will by it be taken off from their vain confidences, *though they be a rebellious houſe*. Note, We muſt not deſpair even of the worſt, but that yet they may be brought to bethink themſelves and repent; and therefore muſt continue the uſe of proper means for their conviction and converſion, becauſe while there is life there is hope: And miniſters muſt be willing to go through the moſt difficult and inconvenient offices (for ſuch was this of Ezekiel's removing) though there be but the *it may be* of ſucceſs. If but one ſoul be awakened to *conſider*, our care and pains will be well beſtowed.

(3.) Ezekiel's ready and punctual obedience to the orders God gave him, *ver.* 7. *I did ſo as I was commanded*. Hereby he teaches us all, and miniſters eſpecially, 1. To obey with chearfulneſs every command of God, even the moſt difficult. Chriſt himſelf *learnt obedience*, and ſo we muſt all. 2. To do all we can for the good of the ſouls of others, to put our ſelves to any trouble, or pains, for the conviction of thoſe that are unconvinced. *We do all things*, that is, we are willing to do any thing, *dearly beloved, for your edifying*. 3. To be our ſelves affected with thoſe things wherewith we deſire to affect others. When Ezekiel would give his hearers a melancholy proſpect, he doth himſelf put on a melancholy aſpect. 4. To ſit looſe to this world, and prepare to leave it; to carry out our *ſtuff for removing*, becauſe *we have here no continuing city*. *Ariſe, depart, this is not your reſt, for it is polluted*. Thou dwelleſt *in a rebellious houſe*, therefore prepare for removing; for who would not be willing to leave ſuch a houſe, ſuch a wicked world as this is?

2. He is directed by what words to explain thoſe ſigns and actions, as Agabus, when he bound his own hands and feet, told whoſe binding was thereby ſignified. But obſerve, it was not till morning that God gave him an expoſition of the ſign, till the next morning, to keep up in him a continual dependence upon God for inſtruction. As what God doth, ſo what he directs us to do, perhaps, we know not now, but ſhall know hereafter.

(1.) It was ſuppoſed that the people would ask the meaning of this ſign, or, at leaſt, they ſhould, *ver.* 9. *Hath not the houſe of Iſrael ſaid unto thee, What doſt thou?* Yes, I know they have. *Though they* are *a rebellious houſe*, yet they are inquiſitive concerning the mind of God; as thoſe, *Iſa.* lviii. 2. who *ſought God daily*. Therefore the prophet muſt do ſuch an odd, uncouth thing, that they might enquire what it meant; and then it may be hoped people will take notice of what is told them, and profit by it, when it comes to them in anſwer to their enquiries. But ſome underſtand it as an intimation that they had not made any ſuch enquiries: *Hath not this rebellious houſe* ſo much as asked thee, *What doſt thou?* No, they take no notice of it; but tell them the meaning of it, though they do not ask. Note, When God ſends to us by his miniſters, he obſerves what entertainment we give to the meſſages he ſends us; he hearkens and hears what we ſay to them, and what enquiries we make upon them; and is much diſpleaſed if we paſs them by without taking any notice of them. When we have heard the word, we ſhould apply our ſelves to our miniſters for further inſtruction, and then we ſhall know, if we thus follow on to know.

(2.) The prophet is to tell them the meaning of it. In general, *ver.* 10. *This burthen concerns the prince in Jeruſalem*; they knew who that was, and gloried in it now they were in captivity, that they had a prince of their own in Jeruſalem, and that *the houſe of Iſrael* was yet entire there, and therefore doubted not but in time to do well enough; but tell them, ſaith God, that, in what thou haſt done, they may read the doom of their friends at Jeruſalem: *Say, I am your ſign*, ver. 11. As the converſation of miniſters ſhould teach the people what they ſhould do, ſo the providences of God concerning them are ſometimes intended to tell them what they muſt expect. The unſettlements and removes of miniſters give warning to people what they muſt expect in this world, no continuance, but conſtant changes. When times of trouble are coming on, Chriſt tells his diſciples, *they ſhall firſt lay their hands on you*, Luke xxi. 12.

1. The people ſhall be led away into captivity, *ver.* 11. *As I have done, ſo ſhall it be done unto them*, they ſhall be forced away from their own houſes, no more to return to them, neither ſhall *their place know them any more*. We cannot ſay concerning our dwelling-place, that it is our reſting-place; for how far we may be toſt from it before we die, we cannot foreſee.

2. The prince ſhall in vain attempt to make his eſcape, for he alſo ſhall go into captivity. Jeremiah had told Zedekiah the ſame to his face, *Jer.* xxxiv. 3. *Thou ſhalt not eſcape, but ſhalt ſurely be taken*. Ezekiel here foretels it to thoſe who made him their confidence,

confidence, and promiſed themſelves relief from him. (1.) That he ſhall himſelf carry away his own goods; *He ſhall bear upon his ſhoulder* ſome of his moſt valuable effects. Note, The judgments of God can turn a prince into a porter: he that was wont to have the regalia carried before him, and to march through the city at noon-day, ſhall now himſelf carry his goods on his back, and ſteal away out of the city in the twilight. See what a change ſin makes with men! All the avenues to the palace being carefully watched by the enemy, *they ſhall dig through the wall, to carry out thereby.* Men ſhall be their own houſe-breakers, and ſteal away their own goods; ſo it is when the ſword of war has cancelled all right and property. (2.) That he ſhall attempt to eſcape in a diſguiſe, with a mask or vizor on, which *ſhall cover his face*, ſo that he ſhall be able only to look before him, and ſhall *not ſee the ground with his eyes.* He that, when he was in pomp, affected to be ſeen, now he is in his flight is afraid to be ſeen; let none therefore either be proud of being looked at, or overmuch pleaſed with looking about them, when they ſee a king with *his face covered that he cannot ſee the ground.* (3.) That he ſhall be made a priſoner, and carried captive into Babylon, *ver.* 13. *My net will I ſpread upon him, and he ſhall be taken in my ſnare.* It ſeemed to be the Chaldeans net, and their ſnare, but God owns it for his. Thoſe that think to outrun the ſword of the Lord, will find themſelves taken in his net. Jeremiah had ſaid that king Zedekiah ſhould *ſee the king of Babylon*, and that he ſhould *go to Babylon*; Ezekiel ſaith he ſhall be *brought to Babylon*, yet he *ſhall not ſee it*, though *he ſhall die there.* Thoſe that were diſpoſed to cavil, would, perhaps, object that theſe two prophets contradicted one another; for one ſaid he ſhould *ſee the king of Babylon*, the other ſaid he ſhould *not ſee Babylon*, and yet both proved true; he did *ſee the king of Babylon* at Riblah, where he paſt ſentence upon him for his rebellion, but there he had his eyes put out, ſo that he did *not ſee Babylon* when he was brought thither. Theſe captives expected to ſee their prince come to Babylon a conqueror, to bring them out of their trouble, but he ſhall come thither a priſoner, and his diſgrace will be a great addition to their troubles: Little joy could they have in ſeeing him, when he could not ſee them. (4.) That all his guards ſhould be diſperſed, and utterly diſabled to do him any ſervice, *ver.* 14. *I will ſcatter all that are about him to help him*, ſo that he ſhall be left helpleſs; *I will ſcatter them among the nations, and diſperſe them in the countries*, ver. 15. to be monuments of divine juſtice wherever they go. But are there not hopes that they may rally again? He that flies one time, may fight another time: No, *I will draw out the ſword after them*, which ſhall cut them off wherever it finds them; for the ſword that God draws out will be ſure to do the execution deſigned; yet of Zedekiah's ſcattered troops ſome ſhall eſcape, *ver.* 16. *I will leave a few men of them*; though they ſhall all be ſcattered, yet they ſhall not all be cut off, ſome ſhall have their *lives given them for a prey*; and it is very obſervable, for what end they are thus remarkably ſpared, *that they may declare all their abominations among the heathen whither they come*; the troubles they are brought into will bring them to themſelves, and to their right mind, and then they will acknowledge the juſtice of God in all that is brought upon them, and will make an ingenuous confeſſion of their ſins which provoked God thus to contend with them; and as by this it ſhall appear that they were ſpared in mercy, ſo hereby they will make a ſuitable, grateful return to God for his favours to them in ſparing them. Note, When God has remarkably delivered us from the deaths wherewith we were ſurrounded, we muſt look upon it, that for this end, among others, we were ſpared, that we might glorify God, and edify others, by making a penitent acknowledgment of our ſins: And thoſe that by their afflictions are brought to this, are then made to know *that God is the Lord*, and may help to bring others to the knowledge of him. See how God brings good out of evil! The diſperſion of ſinners, that had done God much diſhonour and diſſervice in their own country, proves the diſperſion of penitents, that ſhall do him much honour and ſervice in other countries. The Levites are, by a curſe, *divided in Jacob*, and *ſcattered in Iſrael*, yet it is turned into a bleſſing, for thereby they have the faireſt opportunity to *teach Jacob God's laws.*

17. ¶ Moreover, the word of the LORD came to me, ſaying, 18. Son of man, eat thy bread with quaking, and drink thy water with trembling and with carefulneſs, 19. And ſay unto the people of the land, Thus ſaith the LORD God, of the inhabitants of Jeruſalem, *and* of the land of Iſrael, They ſhall eat their bread with carefulneſs, and drink their water with aſtoniſhment, that her land may be deſolate from all that is therein, becauſe of the violence of all them that dwell therein. 20. And the cities *that are* inhabited, ſhall be laid waſte, and the land ſhall be deſolate, and ye ſhall know that I *am* the LORD.

Here again the prophet is made a ſign to them of the deſolations that were coming on Judah and Jeruſalem.

1. He muſt himſelf eat and drink in care and fear, eſpecially when he was in company, *ver.* 17, 18. Though he was under no apprehenſion of danger to himſelf, but lived in ſafety and plenty, yet he muſt *eat his bread with quaking*, the bread of ſorrows, *Pſal.* cxxvii. 2. *and drink his water with trembling, and with carefulneſs*, that he might expreſs the calamitous condition of thoſe that ſhould be in Jeruſalem during the ſiege: Not that he muſt diſſemble, and pretend to be in fear and care when really he was not; but, being to foretel this judgment, to ſhew that he firmly believed it himſelf, and yet was far from deſiring it, in the proſpect of it he was himſelf affected with grief and fear. Note, When miniſters ſpeak of the ruin coming upon impenitent ſinners, they muſt endeavour to ſpeak feelingly, as thoſe that *know the terrors of the Lord:* And they muſt be content to endure hardneſs, ſo they may but do good.

2. He muſt tell them that *the inhabitants of Jeruſalem* ſhould in like manner eat and drink with care and fear, *ver.* 19, 20. Both thoſe that have their home in Jeruſalem, and thoſe *of the land of Iſrael*, that come to ſhelter themſelves there, *they ſhall eat their bread with carefulneſs, and drink their water with aſtoniſhment*, either, becauſe they are afraid it will not hold out, but they ſhall want ſhortly, or, becauſe they are continually expecting the alarms of the enemy, *their life hanging in doubt before them*, Deut. xxviii. 66. ſo that what they have they ſhall have no enjoyment of, nor will it do them any good. Note, Care and fear, if they prevail, are enough to imbitter all our comforts, and are themſelves very ſore judgments. They ſhall be reduced to theſe ſtraits, that thus, by degrees, and by the hand of thoſe that do thus ſtraiten them, both city and country may be laid in ruins; for it is no leſs than an utter deſtruction of both that is aimed at in theſe judgments; *that her land may be deſolate from all* the fulneſs thereof, may be ſtripped of all its ornaments, and robbed of all its fruits; and then, of courſe, *the cities that are inhabited, ſhall be laid waſte*, for they are *ſerved by the field.* This univerſal deſolation was coming upon them, and then no wonder that they eat their bread with care and fear. Now we are here told, 1. How bad the cauſe of this judgment was, it is *becauſe of the violence of all them that dwell therein*; their injuſtice and oppreſſion, and the miſchief they did one another; for which God would reckon with them, as well as for the affronts put upon him in his worſhip. Note, The decay of virtue in a nation brings on a decay of every thing elſe; and when neighbours devour one another, it is juſt with God to bring enemies upon them to devour them all. 2. How good the effect of this judgment ſhould be; *ye ſhall know that I am the Lord*; and if, by theſe judgments, they learn to know him aright, that will make up the loſs of all they are deprived of by theſe deſolations. Thoſe are happy afflictions, how grievous ſoever to fleſh and blood, that help to introduce us into, and improve us in, an acquaintance with God.

21. ¶ And the word of the LORD came unto me, ſaying, 22. Son of man, what *is* that proverb, *that* ye have in the land of Iſrael, ſaying, The days are prolonged, and every viſion faileth? 23. Tell them therefore, Thus ſaith the LORD God, I will make this proverb to ceaſe, and they ſhall no more uſe it as a proverb in Iſrael: but ſay unto them, The days are at hand, and the effect of every viſion. 24. For there ſhall be no more any vain viſion, nor flattering divination within the houſe of Iſrael. 25. For I *am* the LORD: I will ſpeak, and the word that I ſhall ſpeak ſhall come to paſs: it ſhall be no more prolonged: for in your days, O rebellious houſe, will I ſay the word, and will perform it, ſaith the LORD God. 26. ¶ Again the word of the LORD came to me, ſaying, 27. Son of man, behold, *they of* the houſe of Iſrael ſay, The viſion that he ſeeth *is* for many days *to come*, and he propheſieth of the times *that are* far off. 28. Therefore ſay unto them, Thus ſaith the LORD God, There ſhall none of my words be prolonged any more, but the word which I have ſpoken ſhall be done, ſaith the LORD God.

Various methods had been uſed to awaken this ſecure and careleſs people to an expectation of the judgments coming, that they might be ſtirred up, by repentance and reformation, to prevent them; the propheſies of their ruin were confirmed by viſions, and illuſtrated by ſigns, and all with ſuch evidence and power, that, one would think, they muſt needs be wrought upon; but here we are told how they evaded the conviction, and guarded againſt it, namely, by telling themſelves, and one another, that though theſe judgments threatned ſhould come at laſt, yet they would not come of a long time. This ſuggeſtion, with which they bolſtered themſelves up in their ſecurity, is here anſwered, and ſhewed to be vain and groundleſs, in two ſeveral meſſages which God ſent to them by the prophet at ſeveral times, both to the ſame purpoſe; ſuch care, ſuch pains, muſt the prophet take to undeceive them! *ver.* 21, 26. Obſerve,

1. How they flattered themſelves with hopes that the judgments ſhould be delayed. One ſaying they had, which was become proverbial

verbial *in the land of Iſrael*, ver. 22. They ſaid, *The days are prolonged*, the judgments are not come when they were expected to come, but ſeem to be ſtill put off *de die in diem*, and therefore we may conclude that *every viſion fails*, becauſe it ſhould ſeem that ſome do; that, becauſe the deſtruction is not come yet, it will never come; we will never truſt prophet again, for we have been worſe frighted than hurt. And another ſaying they had, which if it would not conquer their convictions, yet would cool their affections, and abate their concern, and that was, That *the viſion* was *for* a great while *to come*, it refers to events at a mighty diſtance, *and he propheſies of* things, which, though they may be true, yet *are* very *far off*, ſo that we need not to trouble our heads about them, *ver.* 27. we may die in honour and peace before theſe troubles come: And if indeed the troubles had been thus adjourned, they might have made themſelves eaſy, as Hezekiah did, *Is it not well, if peace and truth ſhall be in my days?* But it was a great miſtake, and they did but deceive themſelves into their own ruin; and God is here much diſpleaſed at it, for, 1. It was a wretched abuſe of the patience of God, who, becauſe for a time he kept ſilence, was thought to be *altogether ſuch a one as themſelves*, Pſalm l. 21. That *forbearance of God*, which ſhould have *led them to repentance*, hardened them in ſin. They were willing to think their works were not *evil*, *becauſe ſentence againſt* them was *not executed ſpeedily*; and therefore concluded the *viſion* it ſelf *failed*, becauſe *the days were prolonged*. 2. It received countenance from the falſe prophets that were among them, as ſhould ſeem from the notice God takes, *ver.* 24. of the *vain viſions*, and *flattering divinations*, even *within the houſe of Iſrael*, to whom *were committed the oracles of God*. They that deceived themſelves by worſhipping pretended deities, no marvel if they deceived themſelves by crediting pretended prophecies, *to* which *ſtrong deluſions* God juſtly *gave them up* for their idolatries. 3. Theſe ſayings were become proverbial, they were induſtriouſly ſpread among the people, ſo that they were got into every one's mouth, and not only ſo, but were generally aſſented to, as proverbs uſe to be, not only the proverbs of the ancients, but thoſe of the moderns too. Note, It is a token of univerſal degeneracy in a nation, when corrupt and wicked ſayings are grown proverbial; and it is an artifice of Satan, by them to confirm men in their prejudices againſt the word and ways of God, and a great offence to the God of heaven. It will not ſerve for an excuſe in ſaying ill, to plead that it is a common ſaying.

2. How they are aſſured that they do but deceive themſelves, for the judgments ſhall be haſtened, theſe profane proverbs ſhall be confronted: *Tell them therefore, The days are at hand*, ver. 23. and again, *ver.* 28. *There ſhall none of my words be prolonged any more.* Their putting the evil day far from them, doth but provoke God to bring it the ſooner upon them; and it will be ſo much the ſorer, ſo much the heavier, ſo much the more a ſurprize and terror to them when it doth come. He muſt tell them,

(1.) That God will certainly ſilence the lying proverbs, and the lying prophecies, with which they buoyed up their vain hopes, and make them aſhamed of both. 1. *I will make this proverb to ceaſe*; for when they find the days of vengeance are come, and not one iota or tittle of the prediction falls to the ground, they will be aſhamed to *uſe it as a proverb in Iſrael, The days are prolonged, and the viſion fails.* Note, Thoſe that will not have their eyes opened, and their miſtakes rectified, by the word of God, ſhall be undeceived by his judgments, for *every mouth* that ſpeaks perverſe things *ſhall be ſtopped.* 2. *There ſhall be no more any vain viſion*, ver. 24. The falſe prophets, who told the people they ſhould have peace, and ſhould ſoon ſee an end of their troubles, ſhall be diſproved by the event, and then ſhall be aſhamed of their pretenſions, and ſhall hide their heads, and impoſe ſilence upon themſelves. Note, As truth was elder than error, ſo it will ſurvive it; it got the ſtart, and it will get the race. The true prophets viſions and predictions ſtand and be in full force, power and virtue, they give law, and receive credit, when the *vain viſions*, and the *flattering divinations*, are loſt and forgotten, and *ſhall be no more in the houſe of Iſrael*; for *great is the truth, and will prevail.*

(2.) That God will certainly, and very ſhortly accompliſh every word that he has ſpoken. With what majeſty doth he ſay it, *ver.* 25. *I am the Lord! I am Jehovah!* That glorious name of his ſpeaks him a God giving being to his word by the performance of it, and therefore to the patriarchs, who lived by faith in a promiſe not yet performed, he was not known by his name Jehovah, *Exod.* vi. 3. But as he is Jehovah in making good his promiſe, ſo he is in making good his threatnings: Let them know then that God, *with whom* they *have to do*, is the great Jehovah, and therefore,

1. He *will ſpeak, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear*; *I am the Lord, I will ſpeak.* God will have his ſaying, whoever gainſays it. God's oracles are called lively ones, for they ſtill ſpeak, when the pagan oracles are long ago ſtruck dumb. There has been, and ſhall be, a ſucceſſion of God's miniſters to the end of the world, by whom he will ſpeak; and though contempt may be put upon them, that ſhall not put a period to their miniſtration: *In your days, O rebellious houſe, will I ſay the word.* Even in the worſt ages of the church God *left not himſelf without witneſs*, but raiſed up men that ſpoke for him, that ſpoke from him. *I will ſay the word*, the word that ſhall ſtand.

2. *The word that he ſpeaks ſhall come to paſs*, it ſhall infallibly be accompliſhed, according to the true intent and meaning of it, and according to the full extent and compaſs of it. *I will ſay the word, and will perform it*, ver. 25. for his mind is never changed, nor his arm ſhortned, nor is infinite wiſdom ever nonpluſſed. With men, ſaying and doing are two things, but they are not ſo with God; with him it is *dictum, factum:* In the works of providence, as in that of creation, *he ſpeaks, and it is done*; for he *ſaid, Let there be light, and there was light: Let there be a firmament, and there was a firmament*, Numb. xxiii. 19. 1 Sam. xv. 29. Whereas they had ſaid, *Every viſion fails*, ver. 22. God ſaith, No, There ſhall be *the effect of every viſion*, ver. 23. it ſhall not return void, but every ſign ſhall be anſwered by the thing ſignified. They that *ſee the viſions of the Almighty*, do not ſee *vain viſions:* God *confirmeth the word of his ſervants*, by performing it.

3. It ſhall be accompliſhed very ſhortly; *The days are at hand*, when you ſhall ſee *the effect of every viſion*, ver. 23. It is ſaid, it is ſworn, that *delay ſhall be no longer*, Rev. x. 6. the year of God's patience is now juſt expired, and he will no longer defer the execution of the ſentence; *It ſhall be no more prolonged*, ver. 25. he hath born with you a great while, but he will not bear always: *In your days, O rebellious houſe*, ſhall the word that is ſaid be *performed*, and you ſhall ſee the threatned judgments, and ſhare in them. *Behold, the judge ſtandeth at the door.* The *righteous are taken away from the evil to come*, but this *rebellious houſe* ſhall not ſo be quietly taken away; no, they ſhall live to be hurried away, to *be chaſed out of the world.* This is repeated again, *ver.* 28. *There ſhall none of my words be prolonged any more*, but judgment ſhall now haſten on apace; and the longer the bow has been in the drawing, the deeper ſhall the arrow pierce. When we tell ſinners of death and judgment, heaven and hell, and think, by them, to perſwade them to a holy life, though we do not find them downright infidels, they will own that they do believe there is a ſtate of rewards and puniſhments in the other world, yet they put by the force of thoſe great truths, and avoid the impreſſions of them, by looking upon the things of the other world as very remote; they tell us, *The viſion* we *ſee is for many days to come, and* we *propheſy of the times that are* very *far off*; it will be time enough to think of them, when they come nearer; whereas really there is but a ſtep between us and death, between us and an awful eternity; *yet a little while, and the viſion ſhall ſpeak, and not lie*, and therefore it concerns us to redeem time, and get ready, with all ſpeed, for a future ſtate; for though it is future, it is very near; and while impenitent ſinners ſlumber, their *damnation ſlumbers not.*

CHAP. XIII.

Mention had been made in the chapter before of the vain viſions, and flattering divinations, with which the people of Iſrael ſuffered themſelves to be impoſed upon, ver. 24. *now this whole chapter is levelled againſt them. God's faithful prophets are no where ſo ſharp upon any ſort of ſinners, as upon the falſe prophets; not becauſe they were the moſt ſpiteful enemies to them, but becauſe they put the higheſt affront upon God, and did the greateſt miſchief to his people. The prophet here ſhews the ſin and puniſhment,* 1. *Of the falſe prophets*, ver. 1,—16. 2. *Of the falſe propheteſſes*, ver. 17,—23. *Both agreed to ſooth men up in their ſins, and, under pretence of comforting God's people, to flatter them with hopes that they ſhould yet have peace; but the prophets ſhall be proved liars, their prophecies meer ſhams, and the expectations of the people illuſions; for God will let them know that* the deceived and the deceiver are his, *are both accountable to him*, Job xii. 16.

1. AND the word of the LORD came unto me, ſaying, 2. Son of man, propheſy againſt the prophets of Iſrael that propheſy, and ſay thou unto them that propheſy out of their own hearts, Hear ye the word of the LORD, 3. Thus ſaith the LORD God; Wo unto the fooliſh prophets, that follow their own ſpirit, and have ſeen nothing. 4. O Iſrael, thy prophets are like the foxes in the deſerts. 5. Ye have not gone up into the gaps, neither made up the hedge for the houſe of Iſrael, to ſtand in the battle in the day of the LORD. 6. They have ſeen vanity, and lying divination, ſaying, The LORD ſaith; and the LORD hath not ſent them: and they have made *others* to hope that they would confirm the word. 7. Have ye not ſeen a vain viſion, and have ye not ſpoken a lying divination, whereas ye ſay, the LORD ſaith *it*, albeit I have not ſpoken? 8. Therefore thus ſaith the LORD God, Becauſe ye have ſpoken vanity, and ſeen lies, therefore behold, I *am* againſt you, ſaith the LORD God. 9. And mine hand ſhall be upon the prophets that ſee vanity, and that divine lies: they ſhall not be in the aſſembly of my people, neither ſhall they be written in the writing of the houſe of Iſrael, neither

neither ſhall they enter into the land of Iſrael, and ye ſhall know that I *am* the LORD God.

The falſe prophets, which are here propheſied againſt, were ſome of them at Jeruſalem, *Jer.* xxiii. 14. *I have ſeen in the prophets at Jeruſalem a horrible thing*; ſome of them among the captives in Babylon, for to them Jeremiah writes, *Jer.* xxix. 8. *Let not your diviners, that be in the midſt of you, deliver you.* And as God's prophets, though at a diſtance from each other in place or time, yet preached the ſame truths, which was an evidence that they were guided by one and the ſame good Spirit, ſo the falſe prophets propheſied the ſame lies, being acted by one and the ſame ſpirit of error. There were little hopes of bringing them to repentance, they were ſo hardned in their ſin, yet Ezekiel muſt propheſy againſt them, in hopes the people might be cautioned not to hearken to them; and thus a teſtimony will be left upon record againſt them, and they thereby left inexcuſable.

Ezekiel had expreſs orders to *propheſy againſt the prophets of Iſrael*, ſo they called themſelves; as if none but they had been worthy of the name of Iſrael's prophets, who were indeed Iſrael's deceivers. But it is obſervable, that Iſrael was never impoſed upon by pretenders to prophecy, till after they had rejected and abuſed the true prophets; as afterwards they were never deluded by counterfeit meſſiahs, till after they had refuſed the true Meſſiah, and rejected him. Theſe falſe prophets muſt be required to *hear the word of the Lord:* They took upon them to ſpeak what concerned others, as from God, let them now hear what concerned themſelves, as from him.

And two things the prophet is directed to do;

(1.) To diſcover their ſin to them, and to convince them of that, if poſſible, or thereby to prevent their proceeding any further, by making *manifeſt their folly unto all men*, 2 Tim. iii. 9. They are here called *fooliſh prophets*, ver. 3. men that did not at all underſtand the buſineſs they pretended to; to make fools of the people, they made fools of themſelves, and put the greateſt cheat upon their own ſouls. Let us ſee what is here laid to their charge.

1. They pretend to have a commiſſion from God, whereas he never *ſent them*; they thruſt themſelves into the prophetical office, without warrant from him, who is *the Lord God* of the holy prophets, which was a fooliſh thing; for how could they expect God ſhould own them in a work to which he never called them? They are *prophets out of their own hearts*, ſo the margin reads it, *ver.* 2. prophets of their own making, *ver.* 6. *They ſay, The Lord ſaith*, they pretend to be his meſſengers, but *the Lord hath not ſent them*, has not given them any orders; they counterfeit the broad ſeal of heaven, than which they cannot do a greater indignity to mankind, for hereby they put a reproach upon divine revelation, leſſen its credit, and weaken its credibility; when theſe pretenders are found to be deceivers, atheiſts and infidels will thence infer, they are all ſo. *The Lord has not ſent them*, for, though crafty enough in other things, *like the foxes*, and very wiſe for the world, yet they are *fooliſh prophets*, and have no experimental acquaintance with the things of God. Note, Fooliſh prophets are not of God's ſending, for whom he ſends, he either finds fit, or makes fit. Where he gives warrant, he gives wiſdom.

2. They pretend to have inſtructions from God, whereas he never made himſelf, and his mind known to them: *They follow their own ſpirit*, ver. 3. they deliver that as a meſſage from God, which is the product either of their ſubtil invention, to ſerve a turn for themſelves, or of their own crazed and heated imagination, to give vent to a fancy; for *they have ſeen nothing*, i. e. they have not really had any heavenly viſion; they pretend that what they ſay, *the Lord ſaith it*, but God diſowns it, *I have not ſpoken it*, I never ſaid it, never meant any ſuch thing. What they delivered was not what they had *ſeen* or *heard*, as that is which the miniſters of Chriſt deliver, 1 *John* i. 1. but either what they had dreamed, or what they thought would pleaſe thoſe they coveted to make an intereſt in; this is called their *ſeeing vanity, and lying divination*, ver. 6. they pretend to have ſeen that which they did not ſee, and produced that as a divine truth, which they knew to be falſe. To the ſame purpoſe, *ver.* 7. *Ye have ſeen a vain viſion, and ſpoken a lying divination*, which had no divine original, and would have no effect, but would certainly be diſproved by the event; and, *ver.* 8. the words are changed, *Ye have ſpoken vanity, and ſeen lies*; what they ſaw, and what they ſaid, was all alike, a meer ſham; they ſaw nothing, they ſaid nothing to the purpoſe, nothing that could be relied on, or deſerved regard. Again, *ver.* 9. They *ſee vanity, and divine lies*; they pretend to have had viſions, as the true prophets had, whereas really they had none, but either it was the creature of their own fancy, they thought they had a viſion, as men in a delirium do, that was *ſeeing vanity*, or it was a fiction of their own politicks, and they knew they had none, and then they *ſaw lies, and divined lies*. See *Jer.* xxiii. 16, &c. Note, Since the devil is univerſally known to be the father of lies, thoſe put the higheſt affront imaginable upon God, who tell lies, and then father them upon him. But they that had put God's character upon Satan, in worſhipping devils, arrived at length to that pitch of impiety ar to put Satan's character upon God.

3. They took no care to prevent the judgments of God that were breaking in upon the kingdom. They are like *the foxes in the deſerts*, running to and fro, and ſeeming to be in a mighty hurry, but it was to get away and ſhift for their own ſafety, not to do any good: *The hireling flees and leaves the ſheep.* They are like foxes that are greedy of prey for themſelves, crafty and cruel to feed themſelves. But, *ver.* 5. ye *have not gone up into the gaps, nor made up the hedge of the houſe of Iſrael.* A breach is made in their fences, at which judgments are ready to pour in upon them, and then, if ever, is the time to do them ſervice; but ye have done nothing to help them. They ſhould have made interceſſion for them, to turn away the wrath of God; but they were not praying prophets, had no intereſt in heaven, nor intercourſe with heaven, as prophets uſed to have, *Gen.* xx. 7. and ſo could do them no ſervice that way. They ſhould have made it their buſineſs, by preaching and advice, to bring people to repentance and reformation; and ſo have *made up the hedge*, and put a ſtop to the judgments of God; but this was none of their care, they contrived how to pleaſe people, not how to profit them. They ſaw a deluge of profaneneſs and impiety breaking in upon the land, waging war with virtue and holineſs, and threatning to cruſh them and bear them down, and then they ſhould have come in *to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord againſt the mighty*, by witneſſing againſt the wickedneſs of the time and place they lived in, but they thought that would be as dangerous a piece of ſervice as ſtanding in a breach to make it good againſt the beſiegers, and therefore they declined it, did nothing to ſtem the tide, ſtood not in the battle againſt vice and immorality, but baſely deſerted the cauſe of religion and reformation, *in the day of the Lord*, when it was proclaimed, *Who is on the Lord's ſide? Who will riſe up for me againſt the evil doers?* Pſal. xciv. 16. Thoſe were unworthy the name of prophets that could think ſo favourably of ſin, and had ſo little zeal for God and the publick welfare.

4. They flattered people into a vain hope that the judgments God had threatened would never come, whereby they hardened thoſe in ſin whom they ſhould have endeavoured to turn from ſin, *ver.* 6. *They have made others to hope* that all ſhould be well, and they ſhould have peace though they went on ſtill in their treſpaſſes, and that the event would confirm the word. They were ſtill ready to ſay, *We will warrant you theſe troubles will be at an end preſently, and we ſhall be in proſperity again.* As if their warrants would confirm falſe prophecies, in defiance of God himſelf.

2. He is directed to denounce the judgments of God againſt them for theſe ſins, from which their pretending to the character of prophets would not exempt them.

1. In general, here is a *Wo* againſt them, *ver.* 3. and what that wo is we are told, *ver.* 8. *Behold, I am againſt you, ſaith the Lord God.* Note, Thoſe are in a woful condition that have God againſt them. Wo, and a thouſand woes to them that have made him their enemy.

2. In particular, They are ſentenced to be excluded from all the privileges of the commonwealth of Iſrael, for they are adjudged to have forfeited them all, *ver.* 9. God's *hand ſhall be upon them*, to ſeize them and bring them to his bar, to ſhut them out from his preſence, and they will find it a *fearful thing to fall into his hands.* They pretend to be prophets, particular favourites of heaven, and authorized to preſide in the congregation of his church on earth; but by pretending to the honours they were not entitled to, they loſt thoſe that otherwiſe they might have enjoyed, *Matth.* v. 19. Their doom is, (1.) To be expelled out of the communion of ſaints, and not to be looked upon as belonging to it: *They ſhall not be in the ſecret of my people*, their folly ſhall be ſo clearly manifeſted that they ſhall never be conſulted, nor their advice asked; they ſhall not be preſent at any debates about publick affairs. Or rather, they ſhall not be in the aſſembly of God's people for religious worſhip, for they ſhall be aſhamed to ſhew their heads there, when they are proved, by the events, to be falſe prophets, and, like Cain, ſhall *go out from the preſence of the Lord.* The people that are deceived by them ſhall abandon them, and reſolve to have no more to do with them. They that uſurped Moſes's chair ſhall not be allowed ſo much as a *door-keeper's place.* In the great day they ſhall *not ſtand in the congregation of the righteous*, Pſal. i. 5. when God *gathers his ſaints together to him*, Pſal. l. 5, 16. *to be for ever with him.* (2.) To be expunged out of the book of the living. They ſhall die in their captivity, and ſhall die childleſs, ſhall leave no poſterity to take their denomination from them, and ſo their names ſhall not be found among thoſe, who either themſelves or their poſterity returned out of Babylon, of whom a particular account was kept in a publick regiſter; which was called *the writing of the houſe of Iſrael*, ſuch as we have *Ezra* ii. They ſhall not be found among the living in Jeruſalem, *Iſa.* iv. 3. Or, they ſhall not be *found written* among thoſe whom God has from eternity choſen to be veſſels of his mercy to eternity. We read of thoſe who *propheſied in Chriſt's name*, and yet he will tell them he *never knew them*, Matt. vii. 22, 23. becauſe they were not among thoſe that were *given to him.* The Chaldee paraphraſe reads it, *They ſhall not be written in the writing of eternal life, which is written for the righteous of the houſe of Iſrael.* See Pſal. lxix. 28. (3.) To be

be for ever excluded ont of the land of Iſrael. God hath *ſworn in his wrath* concerning them, that *they ſhall never enter* with the returning captives into the land of Canaan, which a ſecond time remains a reſt for them. Note, Thoſe who oppoſe the deſign of God's threatnings, and will not be awed and influenced by them, forfeit the benefit of his promiſes, and cannot expect to be comforted and encouraged by them.

10. ¶ Becauſe, even becauſe they have ſeduced my people, ſaying, Peace, and *there was* no peace; and one built up a wall, and lo, others daubed it with untempered *morter*. 11. Say unto them which daub *it* with untempered *morter*, that it ſhall fall: there ſhall be an overflowing ſhower, and ye, O great hailſtones, ſhall fall, and a ſtormy wind ſhall rent *it*. 12. Lo, when the wall is fallen, ſhall it not be ſaid unto you, Where *is* the daubing wherewith ye have daubed *it*? 13. Therefore thus ſaith the LORD God, I will even rent *it* with a ſtormy wind in my fury: and there ſhall be an overflowing ſhower in mine anger, and great hailſtones in *my* fury to conſume *it*. 14. So will I break down the wall that ye have daubed with untempered *morter*, and bring it down to the ground, ſo that the foundation thereof ſhall be diſcovered, and it ſhall fall, and ye ſhall be conſumed in the midſt thereof: and ye ſhall know that I *am* the LORD. 15. Thus will I accompliſh my wrath upon the wall, and upon them that have daubed it with untempered *morter*, and will ſay unto you, The wall *is* no *more*, neither they that daubed it; 16. *To wit*, the prophets of Iſrael, which propheſy concerning Jeruſalem, and which ſee viſions of peace for her, and *there is* no peace, ſaith the LORD God.

We have here more plain dealing with the falſe prophets, and ſome further articles of their doom. We have ſeen the people made aſhamed of the falſe prophets (though ſometimes they had been fond of them) and caſting them away, as they ſhall do their falſe gods, with indignation; now here we find them as much aſhamed of their falſe prophecies, which they had ſometimes depended upon with much aſſurance.

Obſerve, 1. How the people are deceived by the falſe prophets. Thoſe flatterers ſeduce them, ſaying, *Peace, and there was no peace*, ver. 10. They pretended to have *ſeen viſions of peace*, ver. 16. But that could not be, for *there was no peace, ſaith the Lord God*. There was no proſperity deſigned for them, and therefore there could be no ground for their ſecurity; yet they told them God was at peace with them. and had mercy in reſerve for them, and the war they were engaged in with the Chaldeans ſhould ſoon end in an honourable peace, and their land ſhould enjoy a happy repoſe and tranquillity. They told the idolaters and other ſinners, there was neither harm nor danger in the way they were in. Thus they *ſeduced God's people*, they put a cheat upon them, led them into miſtakes, and drew them aſide out of that way of repentance and reformation which the other prophets were endeavouring to bring them into. Note, Thoſe are the moſt dangerous ſeducers who ſuggeſt to ſinners that which tends to leſſen their dread of ſin, and their fear of God. Now this is compared to the building of a ſlight, rotten wall, or, according to our Saviour's ſimilitude, which is to the ſame purpoſe with this, *Matt.* vii. 26. the *building of a houſe upon the ſand*, which ſeems to be a ſhelter and protection for a while, but will fall when a ſtorm comes. One falſe prophet built the wall, ſet up the notion that God was not at all diſpleaſed with Jeruſalem, but that city ſhould be confirmed in its flouriſhing eſtate, and be victorious over the powers that now threatened it. This notion was very pleaſing, and he that ſtarted it made himſelf very acceptable by it, and was careſſed by every body; which invited others to ſay the ſame; they made the matter look yet more plauſible and promiſing, they *daubed the wall*, which the firſt had built, but it was with *untempered morter*, ſorry ſtuff that will not bind nor hold the bricks together, they had no ground for what they ſaid, nor had it any conſiſtency with itſelf, but was like ropes of ſand. They did not ſtrengthen the wall, were in no care to make it firm, to ſee that they went upon ſure grounds, they only daubed it to hide the cracks, and made it look well to the eye. And the wall thus built, when it comes to any ſtreſs, much more to any diſtreſs, will bulge and totter, and come down by degrees. Note, Doctrines that are groundleſs, though never ſo grateful, that are not built upon a ſcriptural foundation, nor faſtened with a ſcripture cement, though never ſo plauſible, never ſo pleaſing, are not of any worth, nor will ſtand men in any ſtead. And thoſe hopes of peace and happineſs which are not warranted by the word of God, will but cheat men, like a wall that is well *daubed* indeed, but ill built.

2. How they will be ſoon undeceived by the judgment of God, which we are ſure is according to truth.

1. God will in anger bring a terrible ſtorm that ſhall beat fiercely and furiouſly upon the wall. The deſcent which the Chaldean army ſhall make upon Judah, and the ſiege they ſhall lay to Jeruſalem, will be as *an overflowing ſhower*, or inundation, ſuch as Solomon calls a *ſweeping rain that leaves no food*, Prov. xxviii. 3. will bear down all before it, as the deluge did in Noah's time; *Ye, O great hailſtones, ſhall fall*, the artillery of heaven, every hailſtone like a cannon-ball, battering this wall, and with theſe a *ſtormy wind*, which is ſometimes ſo ſtrong as to *rend the rocks*, 1 *Kings* xix. 11. much more an ill built wall, *ver.* 11. But that which makes this *rain*, and *hail*, and *wind* moſt terrible is, that they ariſe from the wrath of God, and are enforced by that: that is it that ſends them, that is it that gives them the ſetting on, *ver.* 13. it is *a ſtormy wind in my fury*, and *an overflowing ſhower in mine anger*, and *great hailſtones in my fury*. The fury of Nebuchadnezzar and his princes, who highly reſented Zedekiah's treachery, made the invaſion very formidable, but that was nothing in compariſon with God's diſpleaſure; *the ſtaff in their hand is mine indignation*, Iſa. x 5. Note, An angry God has winds and ſtorms at command, wherewith to alarm ſecure ſinners; and his wrath makes them frightful and forcible indeed; for *who can ſtand before him when he is angry?*

2. This ſtorm ſhall overturn the wall; *it ſhall fall*, and the wind ſhall *rend it*, ver. 11. the *hailſtones ſhall conſume it*, ver. 13. I will *break it down*, ver. 14. and *bring it to the ground*, ſo that the *foundation thereof ſhall be diſcovered*, it will appear how falſe, how rotten it was, to the prophetical reproach of the builders; when the Chaldean army has made Judah and Jeruſalem deſolate, then this credit of the prophets, and the hopes of the people, will ſink together; the former will be found falſe in flattering the people, and the latter fooliſh in ſuffering themſelves to be impoſed upon by them, and ſo expoſed to ſo much the greater confuſion, when the judgment ſhould ſurprize them in their ſecurity. Note, Whatever men think to ſhelter themſelves with againſt the judgments of God, while they continue unreformed, will prove but a *refuge of lies*, and will not profit them *in the day of wrath*. See *Iſa.* xxviii. 17. Mens anger cannot ſhake that which God has built, for the blaſt of the terrible ones is but as a ſtorm againſt the wall, which makes a great noiſe but never ſtirs the wall. See *Iſa.* xxv. 4. but God's anger will overthrow that which men have built in oppoſition to him. They and all their attempts, they and all the ſecurities wherein they entrench themſelves ſhall be as a *bowing wall, and as a tottering fence*, Pſal. lxii. 10. and when their vain predictions are diſproved, and their vain expectations diſappointed, then it will be diſcovered that there was no ground for either, *Hab.* iii. 13. the *day will declare* what every man's work is, and *the fire will try it*, 1 Cor. iii. 13.

3. The builders of the wall, and thoſe that daubed it, will themſelves be buried in the ruins of it: *It ſhall fall, and ye ſhall be conſumed in the midſt thereof*, ver. 14. And thus the threatenings of God's wrath, and all the juſt intentions of it, ſhall be accompliſhed to the uttermoſt, both upon *the wall* and upon them *that have daubed it*, ver. 15. The ſame judgments that will prove the falſe prophets to be falſe, will puniſh them for their falſhood; and they themſelves ſhall be involved in the calamity which they made the people believe there was no danger of, and become monuments of that juſtice which they bid defiance to. Thus, if *the blind lead the blind*, both the blind leaders and the blind followers will *fall together into the ditch*. Note, Thoſe that deceive others will, in the end, prove to have deceived themſelves; and no doom will be more dreadful than that of unfaithful miniſters, that flattered ſinners in their ſins.

4. Both the deceivers and the deceived, when they thus periſh together, will juſtly be ridiculed and triumphed over, *ver.* 12. *When the wall is fallen, ſhall it not be ſaid unto you*, by thoſe that gave credit to the true prophets, and feared the word of the Lord, Now, *where is the daubing wherewith ye have daubed the wall?* What is gone with all the fine, ſoft words and fair promiſes wherewith you flattered your wicked neighbours, and all the aſſurances you gave them that the troubles of the nation ſhould ſoon be at an end? The *righteous ſhall laugh at them*, the righteous God ſhall, righteous men ſhall, ſaying, *Lo, this is the man that made not God his ſtrength*, Pſal. lii. 6, 7. *I alſo will laugh at your calamity*, Prov. i. 26. They will ſay unto you, *ver.* 15. *The wall is no more, neither he that daubed it*; your hopes are vaniſhed, and them that ſupported them, even *the prophets of Iſrael*, ver. 16. Note, Thoſe that uſurp the honours that do not belong to them, will ſhortly be filled with the ſhame that doth.

17. ¶ Likewiſe, thou ſon of man, ſet thy face againſt the daughters of thy people, which propheſy out of their own hearts; and propheſy thou againſt them, 18. And ſay, Thus ſaith the LORD God, Wo to the *women* that ſew pillows to all armholes, and make kerchiefs upon the head of every ſtature to hunt ſouls: Will ye hunt the ſouls of my people, and will ye ſave the ſouls alive *that come* unto you? 19. And will ye pollute me among my people for handfuls of barley, and for pieces of bread, to ſlay the ſouls that ſhould not die, and

and to save the souls alive that should not live, by your lying to my people that hear *your* lyes? 20. Wherefore thus saith the LORD God, Behold, I *am* against your pillows, wherewith ye there hunt the souls, to make *them* fly, and I will tear them from your arms, and will let the souls go, *even* the souls that ye hunt to make *them* fly. 21. Your kerchiefs also will I tear, and deliver my people out of your hand, and they shall be no more in your hand to be hunted, and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD. 22. Because with lyes ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life: 23. Therefore ye shall see no more vanity, nor divine divinations, for I will deliver my people out of your hand; and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD.

As God has promised that when he pours out his Spirit upon his people, both *their sons and their daughters shall prophesy*, so the devil when he acts as a spirit of lyes and falshood, is so not only in the mouth of false prophets, but false propheteſſes too; and those are the deceivers whom the prophet is here directed to prophesy against; for they are not such despicable enemies to God's truths as deserve not to be taken notice of; nor yet will either the weakness of their sex excuse their sin, nor the tenderness and respect that is owing to it exempt them from the reproaches and threatnings of the word of God; no, *Son of man, set thy face against the daughters of thy people*, ver. 17. God takes no pleasure in owning them for his people, they are *thy people*, as *Exod.* xxxii. 7. and the women pretend to a spirit of prophecy, and are in the same song with the men, as Ahab's prophets were, *Go on and prosper*; they *prophesy out of their own heart* too, they say what comes uppermost, and what they know nothing of, therefore *prophesy against them* from God's own mouth. The prophet must *set his face against them*, and try if they can look him in the face and stand to what they say. Note, When sinners grow very impudent, it is time for reprovers to be very bold. Now observe,

1. How the sin of these false propheteſſes is described, and what are the particulars of it.

(1.) They told deliberate lyes to those who consulted them, and came to them to be advised, and to be told their fortune. You do mischief *by your lying to my people that hear your lyes*, ver. 19. they come to be told the truth, but you tell them lyes; and because you humour them in their sins they are willing to hear you. Note, It is ill with those people that can better hear pleasing lyes than unpleasing truths; and it is a temptation to them who lie in wait to deceive to tell lyes, when they find people are willing to hear them; and to excuse themselves with this, *Si populus vult decipi, decipiatur*.

(2.) They profaned the name of God by pretending to have received those lyes from him, *ver.* 19. *Ye pollute my name among my people*, and make use of that for the patronizing of your lyes, and the gaining of credit to them. Note, Those greatly pollute God's holy name that make use of it to give countenance to falshood and wickedness. Yet this they did *for handfuls of barley and pieces of bread*: they did it for gain; they cared not what dishonour they did to God's name by their lying, so they could but make a hand of it for themselves. There is nothing so sacred which men of mercenary spirits, in whom the love of this world reigns, will not profane and prostitute, if they can but get money by the bargain. But they did it for poor gain; if they could get no more for it, rather than break, they would sell you a false prophecy that should please you to a nicety, for the beggar's dole, a *piece of bread*, or *a handful of barley*, and yet that was more than it was worth. Had they asked it as an alms, for God's sake, sure they might have had it, and God would have been honoured, but taking it as a fee for a false prophecy, God's name is polluted, and the smallness of the reward greatens the offence; *for a piece of bread that man will transgress*, Prov. xxviii. 21. Had their poverty been their temptation to *steal, and so take the name of the Lord in vain*, it had been nothing so bad as when it tempted them to *prophesy lyes in his name*, and so to profane it.

(3.) They perfectly kept people in awe, and terrified them with their pretensions; *Ye hunt the souls of my people*, ver. 18. *hunt them to make them flee*, ver. 20. *hunt them into gardens*, so the margin reads it. You use all the arts you have to court or compel them into those places where you deliver your pretended predictions; or, you have got such an influence upon them, that you make them do just as you would have them do, and tyrannize over them. It was indeed the peoples fault that did regard them, but it was their fault, by lyes and falshoods, to command that regard: they pretended to *save the souls alive that came to them*, ver. 18. If they would but be hearers of them, and contributors to them, they might be sure of salvation; thus they beguiled unstable souls that had a concern about salvation as their end, but did not rightly understand the way, and therefore hearkened to those who were most confident in promising it them. But will you pretend to save souls, or secure salvation to your party? Those are justly suspected that make such pretensions.

(4.) They discouraged those that were honest and good, and encouraged those that were wicked and profane. *You slay the souls that should not die, and save those alive that should not live*, ver. 19. which is explained *ver.* 22. *You have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad*, because they would not, they durst not, countenance your pretensions, you thundered out the judgments of God against them, to their great grief and trouble; you put them under invidious characters, to make them either despicable or odious to the people, and pretended to do it in God's name, which made them go many a time with a sad heart; whereas it was the will of God that they should be comforted, and by having respect put upon them should have encouragement given them. But, on the other side, and which is still worse, you have *strengthened the hand of the wicked*, and emboldened them to go on in their *wicked ways*, and not to return from them, which was the thing the true prophets with earnestness called them to. You have promised sinners life in their sinful ways, have told them they shall have peace though they go on, by which their *hands have been strengthened*, and their hearts hardened. Some think this here refers to the severe censures they past upon those that were already gone into captivity, who were humbled under their affliction, by *which their hearts were made sad*; and the commendations they gave to those that rebelled against the king of Babylon, who were hardened in their impieties, by which their *hands were strengthened*: or, by their polluting of the name of God they saddened the hearts of good people, who have a value and veneration for the word of God; and confirmed atheists and infidels in their contempt of divine revelation, and furnished them with arguments against it. Note, Those have a great deal to answer for that grieve the spirits and weaken the hands of good people, and that gratify the lusts of sinners, and animate them in their opposition to God and religion. Nor can any thing strengthen the hands of sinners more than to tell them that they may be saved in their sins without repentance; or that there may be repentance though they do not return from their wicked ways.

(5.) They mimicked the true prophets, by giving signs for the illustrating their false predictions, as Hananiah did, *Jer.* xxviii. 10. and they were signs agreeable to their sex: they *sewed little pillows to the peoples armholes*, to signify that they might be easy and repose themselves, and needed not be disquieted with the apprehensions of trouble approaching. And they *made kerchiefs upon the head of every stature*, i. e. of persons of every age, young and old, distinguishable by their stature, *ver.* 18. These kerchiefs were badges of liberty or triumph; intimating, that they should not only be delivered from the Chaldeans, but be victorious over them. Some think these were some superstitious rites, which they used with those to whom they delivered their divinations, preparing them for the reception of them, by putting enchanted pillows under their arms, and handkerchiefs on their heads, to raise their fancies and their expectation of something great. Or, perhaps, the expressions are figurative; they did all they could to make people secure, which is signified by *laying them easy*, and to make people proud, which is signified by dressing them fine, with handkerchiefs, perhaps, laid, or embroidered, on their heads.

2. How the wrath of God against them is expressed. Here is, a *wo* to them, *ver.* 8. and God declares himself against the methods they took to delude and deceive, *ver.* 20. But what course will God take with them?

1. They shall be confounded in their attempts, and shall proceed no further, for, *ver.* 23. ye shall *see no more vanity, nor divine divinations*, not that they shall themselves lay down their pretensions in a way of repentance, but when the event gives them the lye, they shall be silent for shame. Or, their fancies and imaginations shall not be disposed to receive impressions which assist them in their divinations as they have been; or, they themselves shall be cut off.

2. God's people shall be delivered out of their hands; when they see themselves deluded by them into a false peace and a fool's paradise, and that though they would not leave their sin, their sin has left them, and they *see no more vanity, nor divine divinations*, they shall turn their back upon them, shall slight their predictions, the righteous shall be no more saddened by them, no, nor the wicked strengthened; the *pillows shall be torn from their arms*, and the *kerchiefs from their heads*, the fallacies shall be discovered, their frauds detected, and the people of God shall no more be in their hand, to be hunted as they had been. Note, It is a great mercy to be delivered from a servile regard to, and fear of, those that under colour of a divine authority impose upon and tyrannize over the consciences of men, and say to their souls, *Bow down that we may go over*. But it is a sore grief to those who delight in such usurpations, to have their power broken, and the prey delivered; such was the reformation to the church of Rome. And when God doth this, he makes it to appear that he is the Lord, that it is his prerogative to give law to souls.

CHAP. XIV.

Hearing the word and prayer are two great ordinances of God, in which we are to give honour to him, and may hope to find favour and acceptance with him; and yet in this chapter, to our great surprize, we find some waiting upon God in the one, and some in the other, and yet not meeting with success, as they expected. (1.) The elders of Israel come to hear the word, and enquire of the prophet, but because they are not duly qualified they meet with a rebuke instead of acceptance, ver. 1,—5. *and are called upon to repent of their sins, and reform their lives, else it is at their peril to enquire of God,* ver. 6,—11. *(2.) Noah, Daniel, and Job are supposed to pray for this people, and yet because the decree is gone forth, and the destruction of them is determined, by a variety of judgments their prayers shall not be answer'd,* ver. 12,—21. *And yet it is promis'd in the close, that a remnant shall escape,* ver. 22, 23.

1. THEN came certain of the elders of Israel unto me, and sat before me. 2. And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 3. Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their face: should I be enquired of at all by them? 4. Therefore speak unto them, and say unto them, Thus saith the LORD God, Every man of the house of Israel that setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumbling-block of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet, I the LORD will answer him that cometh, according to the multitude of his idols, 5. That I may take the house of Israel in their own heart, because they are all estranged from me through their idols. 6. ¶ Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the LORD God, Repent and turn *your selves* from your idols, and turn away your faces from all your abominations. 7. For every one of the house of Israel, or of the stranger that sojourneth in Israel, which separateth himself from me, and setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumbling-block of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to a prophet to enquire of him concerning me; I the LORD will answer him by my self. 8. And I will set my face against that man, and will make him a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of my people, and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD. 9. And if the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I the LORD have deceived that prophet, and I will stretch out my hand upon him, and will destroy him from the midst of my people Israel. 10. And they shall bear the punishment of their iniquity, the punishment of the prophet shall be even as the punishment of him that seeketh *unto him:* 11. That the house of Israel may go no more astray from me, neither be polluted any more with all their transgressions: but that they may be my people, and I may be their God, saith the LORD God.

Here is, 1. The address which some of the elders of Israel made to the prophet, as an oracle, to enquire of the Lord by him. They *came and sat before him*, ver. 1. It is probable they were not of those that were now his fellow-captives and constantly attended his ministry, such as those we read of *chap.* viii. 1. but some occasional hearers; some of the grandees of Jerusalem that were come upon business to Babylon, perhaps publick business, on an embassy from the king, and in their way called on the prophet, having heard much of him, and being desirous to know if he had any message from God which might be some guide to them in their negotiation. By the severe answer given them one would suspect they had an ill design to ensnare the prophet, or to try if they could catch hold of any thing that might look like a contradiction to Jeremiah's prophecies, and so they might have occasion to reproach them both. However, they feigned themselves just men, complimented the prophet, and sat before him, gravely enough, as God's people used to sit. Note, It is no new thing for bad men to be found employed in the external performances of religion.

2. The account which God gave the prophet privately concerning them: They were strangers to him, he only knew that they were *elders of Israel*, that was the character they wore, and, as such, he received them with respect, and, it is likely, was glad to see them so well disposed; but God gives him their real character, *ver.* 3. they were idolaters, and did only consult Ezekiel, as they would any oracle of a pretended deity, to gratify their curiosity, and therefore he appeals to the prophet himself, whether they deserved to have any countenance or encouragement given them. *Should I be enquired of at all by them?* Should I accept their enquiries as an honour to my self, or answer them for satisfaction to them? No; they have no reason to expect it; for, 1. They *have set up their idols in their heart*; they not only have idols, but they are in love with them, they dote upon them, are wedded to them; and have laid them so near their hearts, and have given them so great a room in their affections, that there is no parting them. The idols they have set up in their houses, though they are now at a distance from *the chambers of their imagery*, yet they have them in their hearts, and they are ever and anon worshipping them in their fancies and imaginations. *They have made their idols to ascend upon their hearts*, so the word is, *i. e.* they have subjected their hearts to their idols, they are upon the throne there: Or, when they come to enquire of the prophet, they pretended to put away their idols, but it was in pretence only, they still had a secret reserve for them, they kept them *up in their hearts*; and if they left them for a while, it was *cum animo revertendi*, not a final farewel. Or, it may be understood of spiritual idolatry; those, whose affections are placed upon the wealth of the world, and the pleasures of sense, whose god is their money, *whose god is their belly*, they *set up their idols in their heart:* Many that have no idols in their sanctuary, yet have idols in their hearts; which is no less an usurpation of God's throne, and a profanation of his name. *Little children, keep your selves from* those *idols.* 2. They *put the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their face.* Their *silver and gold* was called *the stumbling-block of their iniquity*, chap. vii. 19. their *idols of silver and gold*, by the beauty of which they were allured to idolatry, and so it was the block at which they stumbled, and fell into that sin; or *their iniquity* is their *stumbling-block*, which throws them down, so that they fall into ruin. Note, Sinners are their own tempters; *every man is tempted, when he is drawn aside of his own lust*; and so they are their own destroyers; *If thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it*; and thus *they put the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their* own *faces*, and stumble upon it, though they see it before their eyes. It intimates, that they are resolved to go on in sin, whatever comes of it; *I have loved strangers, and after them I will go*, that is the language of their hearts. And *should* God *be enquired of* by such wretches? Do they not hereby rather put an affront upon him, than do him any honour, as those did that *bowed the knee* to Christ in mockery? Can they expect an answer of peace from God, who thus continue their acts of hostility against him? Ezekiel, what thinkest thou of it?

3. The answer which God, in just displeasure, orders Ezekiel to give them, *ver.* 4. Let them know that it is not out of any disrespect to their persons that God refuseth to give them an answer, but it is laid down as a rule for *every man of the house of Israel*, whoever he be, that if he continue in love and league with his idols, and come to enquire of God, God will resent it as an indignity done to him, and will answer him according to his real iniquity, not according to his pretended piety: He *comes to the prophet*, who he expects will be civil to him, but God will give him his answer, by punishing him for his impudence: *I the Lord*, who *speak, and it is done, I will answer him that cometh, according to the multitude of his idols.* Observe, those that *set up idols in their hearts*, and set their hearts upon their idols, commonly have a *multitude* of them. Humble worshippers God uses to answer *according to the multitude of his mercies*, but bold intruders he answers *according to the multitude of their idols*, i. e. 1. According to the desire of their idols; he will give them up *to their own hearts lust*, and leave them to themselves to be as bad as they have a mind to be, till they *have filled up the measure of their iniquity.* Mens corruptions are *idols in their hearts*, and they are of their own *setting up*; their temptations are *the stumbling-block of their iniquity*, and they are of their own putting, and God *will answer them accordingly*; let them take their course. 2. According to the desert of their idols; they shall have such an answer as it is just such idolaters should have: God will punish them as he useth to punish idolaters, that is, when they stand in need of his help, he will *send them to the gods whom they have chosen*, Judg. x. 13, 14. Note, The judgment of God will dwell with men according to what they are really, that is, according to what their hearts are, not according to what they are in shew and profession.

And what will be the end of this? What will this threatned answer amount to? He tells them, *ver.* 5. *That I may take the house of Israel in their own heart*, may lay them open to the world, that they may be ashamed; nay, lay them open to the curse, that they may be ruined. Note, The sin and shame, and pain and ruin of sinners, is all from themselves, and their own hearts are the snares in which they are taken; they seduce them, they betray them; their own consciences witness against them, condemn them, and are a terror to them. If God take them, if he discover them, if he convict them, if he bind them over to his judgment, it is all by *their own hearts. O Israel, thou hast destroyed thy self. The house of Israel* is ruined by its own hands, *because they are all estranged from me through their idols.* Note, 1. The ruin of sinners is owing to their estrangement from God. 2. It is *through* some *idol* or other that the hearts of men *are estranged from* God, some creature has gained that place and dominion in the heart, that God should have.

4. The

4. The extent of this anſwer God had given them, to all *the houſe of Iſrael*, ver. 7, 8. The ſame thing is repeated, which intimates God's juſt diſpleaſure againſt hypocrites, who mock him with the ſhews and forms of devotion, while their hearts *are eſtranged from* him, and at war with him. Obſerve, 1. To whom this declaration belongs; it concerns not only *every one of the houſe of Iſrael*, as before, *ver.* 4. but *the ſtranger that ſojourns in Iſrael*; let him not think it will be an excuſe for him in his idolatries that he is but a ſtranger, and a ſojourner in Iſrael, and doth but worſhip the gods that his father ſerved, and that he himſelf was bred up in the ſervice of; no, let him not expect any benefit by Iſrael's oracles or prophets, unleſs he throughly renounce his idolatry. Note, Even proſelytes ſhall not be countenanced if they be not ſincere; a diſſembled converſion is no converſion. 2. The deſcription here given of hypocrites; they *ſeparate themſelves from* God; by their fellowſhip with idols, they cut themſelves off from their relation to God, and their intereſt in him; they break off their acquaintance and intercourſe with him, and ſet themſelves at a diſtance from him. Note, Thoſe that join themſelves to idols, *ſeparate themſelves from* God; nor ſhall any be for ever ſeparated from the viſion and fruition of God, but ſuch as now ſeparate themſelves from his ſervice, and wilfully withdraw their allegiance to him. But there are thoſe who thus *ſeparate themſelves from* God, and yet *come to his prophets*, with a ſeeming reſpect and deference to their office, *to enquire of them concerning* God, either to ſatisfy a vain curioſity, or ſtop the mouth of a clamorous conſcience, or to get or ſave a reputation among men, but without any deſire to be acquainted with God, or any deſign to be ruled by him. 3. The doom of thoſe that thus trifle with God, and think to impoſe upon him; *I the Lord will anſwer him by my ſelf*; let me alone to deal with him; I will give him an anſwer that ſhall fill him with confuſion, that ſhall make him repent of his daring impiety; he ſhall have his anſwer, not by the words of the prophet, but by the judgments of God; *and I will ſet my face againſt that man*, which notes great diſpleaſure againſt him, and a fixed reſolution to ruin him. God can outface the moſt impenitent ſinner. The hypocrite thought to ſave his credit, nay, and to gain applauſe, but, on the contrary, God *will make him a ſign and a proverb*, i. e. will inflict ſuch judgments upon him, as ſhall make him remarkable and contemptible in the eyes of all about him; his miſery ſhall be made uſe of to expreſs the greateſt miſery; as when the worſt of ſinners are ſaid to have *their portion appointed them with hypocrites*, Matt. xxiv. 51. God will make him an example, his judgments upon him ſhall be for warning to others to take heed of mocking God; for *thus ſhall it be done to the man that ſeparates himſelf from* God, and yet pretends *to enquire concerning* him: The hypocrite thought to have paſſed for one of God's people, and to have crowded into heaven among them, but God *will cut him off from the midſt of his people*, will diſcover him, and pluck him out from the thickeſt of them; and by this, ſaith God, *ye ſhall know that I am the Lord*; by the diſcovery of hypocrites, it appears that God is omniſcient; miniſters know not how people ſtand affected when they come to hear the word, but God doth; and by the puniſhment of hypocrites, it appears he is a jealous God, and one that cannot, that will not be impoſed upon.

5. The doom of thoſe pretenders to prophecy, who give countenance to theſe pretenders to piety, *ver.* 9, 10. Theſe hypocritical enquirers, though Ezekiel will give them no comfortable anſwer, yet hope to meet with ſome other prophets that will; and if they do, as, perhaps, they may, let them know that God permits thoſe lying prophets to deceive them, in part of puniſhment: *If the prophet*, that flatters them, *be deceived*, and gives them hopes which there is no ground for, *I the Lord have deceived that prophet*, have ſuffered the temptation to be laid before him, and ſuffered him to yield to it, and overruled it for the hardening of thoſe in their wicked courſes that were reſolved to go on in them. We are ſure that God is not the author of ſin, but we are as ſure that he is the Lord of all, and the Judge of ſinners, and often makes uſe of one wicked man to deſtroy another, and ſo of one wicked man to deceive another. Both are ſins in him who doth them, and ſo they are not from God; both are puniſhments to him to whom they are done, and ſo they are from God. We have a full inſtance of this in the ſtory of Ahab's prophets, who were deceived by a lying ſpirit, which God put into their mouths, 1 *Kings* xxii. 23. and another in thoſe whom God *gives up to ſtrong deluſions to believe a lye, becauſe they received not the love of the truth*, 2 Theſſ. ii. 11. But read the fearful doom of the lying prophet, *I will ſtretch out my hand upon him, and will deſtroy him.* When God hath ſerved his own righteous purpoſes by him, he ſhall be reckoned with for his unrighteous purpoſes; as when God had made uſe of the Chaldeans for the waſting of a ſinful people, he juſtly puniſhed them for their rage; ſo when he had made uſe of *falſe prophets*, and afterwards of *falſe chriſts*, for the deceiving of a ſinful people, he juſtly puniſhed them for their falſhood. But herein we muſt acknowledge (as Calvin upon this place minds us) that God's *judgments are a great deep*, that we are incompetent judges of them, and though we cannot account for the equity of God's proceedings, to the ſatisfying and ſilencing of every caviller, yet there is a day coming when he will be juſtified before all the world; and particularly in this inſtance, when *the puniſhment of the prophet*, that flattered the hypocrite in his evil way, ſhall be as the puniſhment of the hypocrite that ſeeketh to him, and beſpeaks *ſmooth things* only, *Iſa.* xxx. 10. The ditch ſhall be the ſame to the blind leader, and the blind followers.

6. The good counſel that is given them for the preventing of this fearful doom, *ver.* 6. *Therefore — Repent and turn your ſelves from your idols*; let this ſeparate between you and them, that they ſeparate between you and God; becauſe they ſet God's face againſt you, do you *turn away your faces from* them, which notes not only forſaking them, but forſaking them with lothing and deteſtation; turn from them, as from *abominations* that you are ſick of; and then you will be welcome to enquire of the Lord: *Come now, and let us reaſon together.*

7. The good iſſue of this, as to *the houſe of Iſrael*; therefore the pretending prophets, and the pretending ſaints, ſhall periſh together by the judgments of God, that, ſome being made examples, the body of the people may be reformed; *that the houſe of Iſrael may go no more aſtray from me*, ver. 11. Note, The puniſhments of ſome are deſigned for the prevention of ſin, that others may hear and fear, and take warning: When we ſee what comes of thoſe that go aſtray from God, we ſhould thereby be engaged to keep cloſe to him: And if *the houſe of Iſrael go not aſtray*, they will *not be polluted any more.* Note, Sin is a polluting thing, it renders the ſinner odious in the eyes of the pure and holy God, and in his own eyes too, whenever conſcience is awakened; and therefore they ſhall *no more be polluted, that they may be my people, and I may be their God.* Note, Thoſe whom God takes into covenant with himſelf, muſt firſt be cleanſed from the pollutions of ſin; and thoſe who are ſo cleanſed, ſhall not only be ſaved from ruin, but be intitled to all the privileges of God's people.

12. ¶ The word of the LORD came again to me, ſaying, 13. Son of man, when the land ſinneth againſt me by treſpaſſing grievouſly, then will I ſtretch out mine hand upon it, and will break the ſtaff of the bread thereof, and will ſend famine upon it, and will cut off man and beaſt from it. 14. Though theſe three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, they ſhould deliver *but* their own ſouls by their righteouſneſs, ſaith the LORD God. 15. ¶ If I cauſe noiſom beaſts to paſs through the land, and they ſpoil it, ſo that it be deſolate, that no man may paſs through becauſe of the beaſts: 16. *Though* theſe three men *were* in it, *as* I live, ſaith the LORD God, they ſhall deliver neither ſons nor daughters; they only ſhall be delivered, but the land ſhall be deſolate. 17. ¶ Or *if* I bring a ſword upon that land, and ſay, Sword, go through the land; ſo that I cut off man and beaſt from it: 18. Though theſe three men *were* in it, *as* I live, ſaith the LORD God, they ſhall deliver neither ſons nor daughters, but they only ſhall be delivered themſelves. 19. ¶ Or *if* I ſend a peſtilence into that land, and pour out my fury upon it in blood, to cut off from it man and beaſt: 20. Though Noah, Daniel, and Job *were* in it, *as* I live, ſaith the LORD God, they ſhall deliver neither ſon nor daughter, they ſhall *but* deliver their own ſouls by their righteouſneſs. 21. For thus ſaith the LORD God, How much more when I ſend my four ſore judgments upon Jeruſalem, the ſword, and the famine, and the noiſom beaſt, and the peſtilence, to cut off from it man and beaſt? 22. ¶ Yet behold, therein ſhall be left a remnant that ſhall be brought forth, *both* ſons and daughters: behold, they ſhall come forth unto you, and ye ſhall ſee their way, and their doings: and ye ſhall be comforted concerning the evil that I have brought upon Jeruſalem, *even* concerning all that I have brought upon it. 23. And they ſhall comfort you when ye ſee their ways and their doings: and ye ſhall know that I have not done without cauſe, all that I have done in it, ſaith the LORD God.

The ſcope of theſe verſes is to ſhew,

1. That national ſins bring national judgments; when virtue is ruined and laid waſte, every thing elſe will ſoon be ruined and laid waſte too, *ver.* 13. *When the land ſinneth againſt me*, when vice and wickedneſs becomes epidemical, *when the land ſinneth by treſpaſſing grievouſly*, when the ſinners are become very numerous, and their ſins very heinous, when groſs impieties and immoralities univerſally prevail, *then will I ſtretch forth mine hand upon it*, for the puniſhment of it; the divine power ſhall be vigorouſly and openly exerted, the judgments ſhall be extended and ſtretched forth to all the corners of the land, to all the concerns and intereſts of the nation: Grievous ſins bring grievous plagues.

2. That

2. That God has variety of ſore judgments wherewith to puniſh ſinful nations, and he has them all at command, and inflicts which he pleaſeth. He did indeed refer it to David, what judgment he would be puniſhed with, for his ſin in numbring the people, for any of them would ſerve to anſwer the end, which was to leſſen the numbers he was proud of; but David, in effect, referred it to God again, *let us fall into the hands of the Lord*; let him chooſe with what rod we ſhall be beaten. But he uſeth a variety of judgments, that it may appear he hath an univerſal dominion, and that in all our concerns we may ſee our dependence on him.

Four ſore judgments are here inſtanced in, 1. *Famine*; the denying and withholding of common mercies is it ſelf judgment enough, there needs no more to make a people miſerable; God needs not bring the ſtaff of oppreſſion, it is but *breaking the ſtaff of bread*, and the work is ſoon done; he *cuts off man and beaſt*, by cutting off the proviſions which nature makes for both in the annual products of the earth: God *breaks the ſtaff of bread*, when, though we have bread, yet we are not nouriſhed and ſtrengthened by it, *Hag.* i. 6. *Ye eat, but ye have not enough.* 2. Hurtful *beaſts*, *noiſom* and noxious; either, as poiſonous, or as ravenous; God can make theſe *to paſs through the land*, to increaſe in all parts of it, and to bereave it, not only of the tame cattle, preying upon their flocks and herds, but of their people, devouring men, women, and children, ſo *that no man may paſs through becauſe of the beaſts*, none dare travel even in the high roads, for fear of being pulled in pieces by lions, or other beaſts of prey, as the children of Beth-el, by two bears. Note, When men revolt from their allegiance to God, and rebel againſt him, it is juſt with God that the inferior creatures ſhould riſe up in arms againſt man, *Lev.* xxvi. 22. 3. War; God often chaſtiſeth ſinful nations by bringing *a ſword upon* them, the ſword of a foreign enemy, and he gives it its commiſſion, and orders what execution it ſhall do, *ver.* 17. He ſaith, *Sword, go through the land.* It is bad enough, if the ſword do but enter into the borders of a land, but much worſe, when it *goes through* the bowels of a land. Then by it God *cuts off man and beaſt*, horſe and foot; what execution the ſword doth, God doth by it; for it is his ſword, and it acts as he directs. 4. *Peſtilence*; a dreadful diſeaſe, which hath ſometime depopulated cities; by it God *pours out his fury in blood*, i. e. in death; the *peſtilence* kills as effectually as if the blood were ſhed by the ſword; for it is poiſoned by the diſeaſe; the ſickneſs we call it. See how miſerable the caſe of mankind is, that lies thus expoſed to deaths in various ſhapes! See how dangerous the caſe of ſinners is, againſt whom God hath ſo many ways of fighting! ſo that though they eſcape one judgment, God has another waiting for them.

3. That when God's profeſſing people revolt from him, and rebel againſt him, they may juſtly expect a complication of judgments to fall upon them. God has various ways of contending with a ſinful nation; but if Jeruſalem, the holy city, *become a harlot*, God will ſend upon her all his *four ſore judgments*, ver. 21. for the nearer any are to God in name and profeſſion, the more ſeverely will he reckon with them if they reproach that worthy name by which they are called, and give the lie to that profeſſion. They ſhall be puniſhed *ſeven times more*.

4. That it is poſſible there may be, and commonly there are ſome few very good men, even in thoſe places that, by ſin, are ripened for ruin: It is no foreign ſuppoſition, that, even in a *land* that has *treſpaſſed grievouſly*, there may be *three* ſuch *men* as Noah, Daniel, and Job; Daniel was now living, and at this time ſcarce arrived to the prime of his eminency, but he was already famous, at leaſt this word of God concerning him would without fail make him ſo; but he was carried away into captivity with the firſt of all, *Dan.* i. 1. Some of the better ſort of people in Jeruſalem might, perhaps, think, if Daniel (of whoſe fame in the king of Babylon's court they had heard much) had but continued in Jeruſalem, it had been ſpared for his ſake, as the magicians in Babylon were; No, ſaith God, though you had him, who was ſo eminently good in bad times and places, as Noah in the old world, and Job in the land of Uz, yet a reprieve ſhould not be obtained. In the places that are moſt corrupt, and in the ages that are moſt degenerate, *yet there is a remnant*, which God reſerves to himſelf, and which *ſtill hold faſt their integrity*, and ſtand fair for the honour of *delivering the land*, as *the innocent* are ſaid to do, Job xxii. 30.

5. That God oftentimes ſpares very wicked places for the ſake of a few godly people in them. This is implied here, as the expectation of Jeruſalem's friends in the day of its diſtreſs. Surely God will ſtay his controverſy with us; for are there not ſome among us that are emptying the meaſure of national guilt by their prayers, as others are filling it by their ſins? and rather than God will *deſtroy the righteous with the wicked*, he will preſerve *the wicked with the righteous*. If Sodom might have been ſpared for the ſake of ten good men, ſure Jeruſalem may.

6. That ſuch men as Noah, Daniel, and Job will prevail, if any can, to turn away the wrath of God from a ſinful people. Noah was a perfect man, and kept his integrity, when all fleſh had corrupted their way, and for his ſake, his family, though one of them was wicked, Ham, was ſaved in the ark: Job was a great example of piety, and mighty in prayer, for his children, for his friends; and God turned his captivity when he prayed. Thoſe were very ancient examples, before Moſes, that great interceſſor, and therefore God mentions them, to intimate, that he had ſome very peculiar favourites, long before the Jewiſh nation was formed or founded, and would have ſuch when it was ruined; for which reaſon, it ſhould ſeem, thoſe names were made uſe of, rather than Moſes, Aaron, or Samuel; and yet, leſt any ſhould think that God was partial in his reſpects to the ancient days, here is a modern inſtance, a living one, placed between thoſe two that were the glories of antiquity, and he now a captive, and that is Daniel, to teach us, not to leſſen the uſeful good men of our own day, by overmagnifying the ancients; let the children of the captivity know, that Daniel, their neighbour, and *companion in tribulation*, being a man of great humility, piety, and zeal for God, and inſtant and conſtant in prayer, had as good an intereſt in heaven, as Noah or Job had. Why may not God raiſe up as great and good men now, as he did formerly, and do as much for them?

7. That when the ſin of a people is come to its height, and the decree is gone forth for their ruin, the piety and prayers of the beſt men ſhall not prevail to take up the controverſy. This is here aſſerted again and again, that *though theſe three men were in* Jeruſalem at this time, yet they ſhould *deliver neither ſon nor daughter*, not ſo much as the little ones ſhould be ſpared for their ſakes, as the little ones of Iſrael were upon the prayer of Moſes, *Numb.* xiv. 31. No, *the land ſhall be deſolate*, and God will not hear their prayers for it, though *Moſes and Samuel ſtood before him*, Jer. xv. 1. Note, Abuſed patience will turn at laſt into exorable wrath; and, it ſhould ſeem, as if God would be more inexorable in Jeruſalem's caſe than in another, *ver.* 6. becauſe, beſide the divine patience, they had enjoyed greater privileges than any people beſide, which were the aggravations of their ſin.

8. That though pious, praying men may not prevail to deliver others, yet *they ſhall deliver their own ſouls by their righteouſneſs*; ſo that, though they may ſuffer in the common calamity, yet, to them, the property of it is altered, it is not that to them that it is to the wicked; it is unſtung, and doth them no hurt; it is ſanctified, and doth them good; ſometimes *their ſouls*, i. e. their lives, are remarkably *delivered*, and *given them for a prey*; however, *their ſouls*, i. e. their ſpiritual intereſts, are ſecured; if their bodies be not *delivered*, yet *their ſouls* are: *Riches* indeed *profit not in the day of wrath*, but *righteouſneſs delivers from death*, from ſo great a death, ſo many deaths as here threatned. This ſhould encourage us to keep our integrity in times of common apoſtaſy, that if we do ſo, we ſhall be *hid in the day of the Lord's anger*.

9. That even then when God makes the greateſt deſolations by his judgments, he reſerves ſome to be the monuments of his mercy, *ver.* 22, 23. In Jeruſalem it ſelf, though marked for utter ruin, yet *there ſhall be left a remnant*, that ſhall not be cut off by any of thoſe *ſore judgments* before mentioned, but ſhall be carried into captivity, both *ſons and daughters*, that ſhall be the ſeed of a new generation; the young ones, that were not grown up to ſuch an obſtinacy in ſin as their fathers were, who were therefore cut off as incurable, theſe *ſhall be brought forth* out of the ruins of Jeruſalem by the victorious enemy, and, *behold, they ſhall come forth to you* that are in captivity, they ſhall make a virtue of a neceſſity, and ſhall come the more willingly to Babylon, becauſe ſo many of their friends are gone thither before them, and are there ready to receive them; and, when they come, *ye ſhall ſee their ways and their doings*, i. e. you ſhall hear them make a free and ingenuous confeſſion of the ſins they had formerly been guilty of, and a humble profeſſion of repentance for them, with promiſes of reformation; and you ſhall ſee inſtances of their reformation, ſhall ſee what good their affliction has done them, and how prudently and patiently they carry themſelves under it. The good effect their narrow eſcape ſhall have upon them, it ſhall change their temper and converſation, and then make them new men. And this will redound, (1.) To the ſatisfaction of their brethren, *they ſhall comfort you when ye ſee their ways*. Note, It is a very comfortable ſight to ſee people, when they are under the rod, repenting and humbling themſelves, juſtifying God, and accepting the puniſhment of their iniquity. When we ſorrow (as we ought to do) for the afflictions of others, it is a great comfort to us in our ſorrow to ſee them improving their afflictions, and making a good uſe of them. When thoſe captives told their friends how bad they had been, and how righteous God was in bringing theſe judgments upon them, it made them very eaſy, and helped to reconcile them to the calamities of Jeruſalem, to the juſtice of God in puniſhing his own people ſo, and to the goodneſs of God, which now appeared to have had kind intentions in all; and thus *ye ſhall be comforted concerning all the evil that I have brought upon Jeruſalem*, and, when you better underſtand the thing, ſhall not have ſuch direful apprehenſions concerning it as you have had. Note, It is a debt we owe to our brethren, if we have got good by our afflictions, to comfort them, by letting them know it. (2.) It will redound to the honour of God: *Ye ſhall know that I have not done it without cauſe*, not without a juſt provocation, and yet not without a gracious deſign, *all that I have done in it*. Note, When afflictions have done their work, and have accompliſhed that for which they were ſent, then will appear the wiſdom and goodneſs of God in ſending them, and God will not only be juſtified, but glorified in them.

CHAP.

CHAP. XV.

Ezekiel has again and again, in God's name, foretold the utter ruin of Jeruſalem, but, it ſhould ſeem, he finds it hard to reconcile himſelf to it, and to acquieſce in the will of God in this ſevere diſpenſation, and therefore God takes various methods to ſatisfy him, not only that it ſhall be ſo, but that there is no remedy, it muſt be ſo, it is fit it ſhould be ſo; here, in this ſhort chapter, he ſhews him (probably, with deſign that he ſhould tell the people) that it was as requiſite Jeruſalem ſhould be deſtroyed, as that the dead and withered branches of a vine ſhould be cut off and thrown into the fire. 1. The ſimilitude is very elegant, ver. 1,—5. *but, 2. The reddition of the ſimilitude is very dreadful,* ver. 6,—8.

1. AND the word of the LORD came unto me, ſaying, 2. Son of man, what is the vine-tree more than any tree, *or than* a branch which is among the trees of the foreſt? 3. Shall wood be taken thereof to do any work? or will *men* take a pin of it to hang any veſſel thereon? 4. Behold, it is caſt into the fire for fuel; the fire devoureth both the ends of it, and the midſt of it is burnt: is it meet for *any* work? 5. Behold, when it was whole it was meet for no work: how much leſs ſhall it be meet yet for *any* work, when the fire hath devoured it, and it is burned? 6. ¶ Therefore thus ſaith the LORD God, As the vine-tree among the trees of the foreſt, which I have given to the fire for fuel, ſo will I give the inhabitants of Jeruſalem. 7. And I will ſet my face againſt them, they ſhall go out from *one* fire, and *another* fire ſhall devour them: and ye ſhall know that I *am* the LORD, when I ſet my face againſt them. 8. And I will make the land deſolate, becauſe they have committed a treſpaſs, ſaith the LORD God.

The prophet, we may ſuppoſe, was thinking what a glorious city Jeruſalem was, above any city in the world; it was the crown and *joy of the whole earth*; and therefore what pity it was that it ſhould be deſtroyed; it was a noble ſtructure, the city of God, and the city of Iſrael's ſolemnities; but if theſe were the thoughts of his heart, God here returns an anſwer to them, by comparing Jeruſalem to a vine.

1. It is true, if a vine be fruitful, it is a moſt valuable tree, none more ſo; it was one of thoſe that was courted to have dominion over the trees, and the fruit of it is ſuch as *cheers God and man*, Judges ix. 12, 13. it *makes glad the heart*, Pſalm civ. 15. So Jeruſalem was *planted a choice and noble vine, wholly a right ſeed*, Jer. ii. 21. and if it had brought forth fruit ſuitable to its character, as a holy city, it would have been the glory both of God and Iſrael; it was a vine which *God's right hand had planted*, a *branch out of a dry ground*, which, though its original was mean and deſpicable, God had *made ſtrong for himſelf*, Pſalm lxxx. 15. to be *to him for a name and for a praiſe*.

2. But if it be not fruitful, it is good for nothing, it is as worthleſs and uſeleſs a product of the earth as even thorns and briers are: *What is the vine-tree*, if you take the tree by it ſelf, without conſideration of the fruit? *what is it more than any tree?* that it ſhould have ſo much care taken of it, and ſo much coſt laid out upon it? What is a branch of the vine, though it ſpread *more than a branch which is among the trees of the foreſt?* where it grows neglected and expoſed: Or, as ſome read it, *What is the vine more than any tree, if the branch of it be as the trees of the foreſt?* i. e. if it bear no fruit, as foreſt trees ſeldom do, being deſigned for timber-trees, not fruit-trees. Now there are ſome fruit-trees, which, if they do not bear, yet, the wood of them is of good uſe, and may be made to turn to a good account; but the vine is none of thoſe, if that do not anſwer its end, as a fruit-tree, it is worth nothing for a timber-tree. Obſerve,

(1.) How this ſimilitude is expreſſed here: The wild vine, that *is among the trees of the foreſt*, or the empty vine, which Iſrael is compared to, *Hoſ.* x. 1. that bears no more fruit than a foreſt-tree, it is good for nothing, it is as uſeleſs as a brier, and more ſo, for that will add ſome ſharpneſs to the thorny hedge, which the vine-branch will not do. He ſhews, 1. That it is fit for no uſe, the *wood* of it is not *taken to do any work*, one cannot ſo much as make *a pin of it to hang a veſſel upon*, ver. 3. See how variouſly the gifts of nature are diſpenſed for the ſervice of man! among plants, the roots of ſome, the ſeeds or fruits of others, the leaves of others, and of ſome the ſtalks are moſt ſerviceable to us; ſo, among trees, ſome are ſtrong and not fruitful, as the oaks and cedars; others weak but very fruitful, as the vine, which is unſightly, low, and depending, yet of great uſe: Rachel is comely, but barren; Leah homely, but fruitful. 2. That therefore it is made uſe of *for fuel*; it will ſerve to heat the oven with. Becauſe *it is* not *meet for any work, it is caſt into the fire*, ver. 4. When it is good for nothing elſe, it is uſeful this way, and anſwers a very needful intention; *for fuel* is a thing we muſt have, and to burn any thing *for fuel*, which is good for other work, is ill husbandry: *To what purpoſe is this waſte?* The unfruitful vine is diſpoſed of the ſame way with the briers and thorns, which are rejected, and *whoſe end is to be burned*, Heb. vi. 8. And what care is taken of it then? If a piece of ſolid timber be kindled, ſome body, perhaps, may ſnatch it *as a brand out of the burning*, and ſay, It is pity to burn it, for it may be put to ſome better uſe; but if the branch of a vine be on fire, and, as uſual, both the ends of it and the middle are kindled together, no body goes about to ſave it; *when it was whole it was meet for no work, much leſs when the fire has devoured it*, ver. 5. even the aſhes of it are not worth ſaving.

(2.) How this ſimilitude is applied to Jeruſalem:

1. That holy city was become unprofitable, and good for nothing; it had been as *the vine-tree among the trees of the* vineyard, abounding in the fruits of righteouſneſs to the glory of God, when religion flouriſhed there, and the pure worſhip of God was kept up, many a joyful vintage was then gathered in from it; and while it continued ſo, God made a hedge about it; it was his *pleaſant plant*, Iſa. v. 7. he *watered it every moment*, and *kept it night and day*, Iſa. xxvii. 3. but it was now become *the degenerate plant of a ſtrange vine*, of a wild vine, ſuch as we read of, 2 *Kings* iv. 39. *a vine-tree among the trees of the foreſt*, which, being wild, *bringeth forth wild grapes*, Iſa. v. 4. which are not only of no uſe, but are nauſeous and noxious, *Deut.* xxxii. 32. *their grapes are grapes of gall, and their cluſters are bitter*. It is explained, *ver.* 8. *They have treſpaſſed a treſpaſs*, i. e. they have treacherouſly prevaricated with God, and perfidiouſly apoſtatized from him; for ſo the word ſignifies. Note, Profeſſors of religion, if they do not live up to their profeſſion, but contradict it, if they degenerate, and depart from it, are the moſt unprofitable creatures in the world, like the *ſalt* that has *loſt its ſavour*, and is thenceforth *good for nothing*, Mark ix. 50. Other nations were famed for valour or politicks, ſome for war, others for trade, and retained their credit; but the Jewiſh nation being famous for a holy people, when they loſt their holineſs, and became wicked, were thenceforth *good for nothing*; with that they loſt all their credit and uſefulneſs, and became the moſt baſe and deſpicable people under the ſun, *trodden under foot of the Gentiles*. Daniel, and other pious Jews, were of great uſe in their generation; but the idolatrous Jews then, and the unbelieving Jews now, ſince the preaching of the goſpel, have been, and are, of no common ſervice, not fit *for any work*.

2. Being ſo, it is *given to the fire for fuel*, ver. 6. Note, Thoſe that are not fruitful to the glory of God's grace, ſhall be fuel to the fire of his wrath; and thus, if they give not honour to him, he will *get him honour upon them*; honour that will ſhine bright in that flaming fire, by which impenitent ſinners will be for ever conſumed: He will not be a loſer at laſt by any of his creatures; *The Lord has made all things for himſelf*, yea, *even the wicked*, that would not otherwiſe be for him, *for the day of evil*, Prov. xvi. 4. And they who would not glorify him as *the God to whom* duty *belongs*, in them he will be glorified as *the God to whom vengeance belongs*. The fire of God's wrath had before *devoured both the ends of* the Jewiſh nation, *ver.* 4. Samaria, and the cities of Judah, and now Jeruſalem, that was *the midſt of it*, was thrown *into the fire* to be *burnt* too, for *it is meet for no work*, it will not be wrought upon, by any of the methods God has taken, to be ſerviceable to him. *The inhabitants of Jeruſalem* were like a vine-branch, rotten and aukward, and therefore, *ver.* 7. *I will ſet my face againſt them*, to thwart all their counſels, as they ſet their faces againſt God, to contradict his word, and defeat all his deſigns. It is decreed, the conſumption is determined, *I will make the land* quite *deſolate*, and therefore, when they *go out from one fire, another fire ſhall devour them*, ver. 7. the end of one judgment ſhall be the beginning of another, and their eſcape from one only a reprieve till another comes; they ſhall go from miſery in their own country, to miſery in Babylon: They that kept out of the way of the ſword, periſhed by famine or peſtilence: When one deſcent of the Chaldean forces upon them was over, and they thought, *ſurely the bitterneſs of death is paſt*, yet ſoon after they returned again with double violence, till they had made a full end. Thus *they ſhall know that I am the Lord*, a God of almighty power, *when I ſet my face againſt them*. Note, God ſhews himſelf to be *the Lord*, by perfecting the deſtruction of his implacable enemies, as well as the deliverances of his obedient people. Thoſe, againſt whom God *ſets his face*, though they may come out of one trouble little hurt, will fall into another; though they *come out of the pit*, will be *taken in the ſnare*, Iſa. xxiv. 18. though they eſcape *the ſword of Hazael*, will fall by that of Jehu, 1 *Kings* xix. 17. for *evil purſues ſinners*: Nay, though *they go out from the fire* of temporal judgments, and ſeem to die in peace, yet there is an everlaſting fire that will *devour them*; for *when God judgeth*, firſt or laſt, *he will overcome*; and will be *known by the judgments which he executeth*. See Matt. iii. 10. *John* xv. 6.

CHAP. XVI.

Still God is justifying himself in the desolations he is about to bring upon Jerusalem, and very largely, in this chapter, he shews the prophet, and orders him to shew the people, that he did but punish them as their sins deserved. In the foregoing chapter, he had compared Jerusalem to an unfruitful vine, that was fit for nothing but the fire; in this chapter, he compares it to an adultéress, that, in justice, ought to be abandoned and exposed; and he must therefore shew the people their abominations, that they might see how little reason they had to complain of the judgments they were under. In this long discourse is set forth, 1. *The despicable and deplorable beginnings of that church and nation,* ver. 3,—5. 2. *The many honours and favours God had bestowed upon them,* ver. 6,—14. 3. *Their treacherous and ungrateful departures from him, to the services and worship of idols, here represented by the most impudent whoredom,* ver. 15,—34. 4. *A threatning of terrible, destroying judgments, which God would bring upon them for this sin,* ver. 35,—43. 5. *An aggravation, both of their sin and of their punishment, by comparison with Sodom and Samaria,* ver. 44,—59. 6. *A promise of mercy in the close, which God would shew to a penitent remnant,* ver. 60,—63. *And this is designed for admonition to us.*

1. AGAIN the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations, 3. And say, Thus saith the LORD God unto Jerusalem, Thy birth, and thy nativity *is* of the land of Canaan, thy father *was* an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite. 4. And *as for* thy nativity in the day thou wast born, thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed in water to supple *thee:* thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all. 5. None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the lothing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born.

Ezekiel is now among the captives in Babylon, but as Jeremiah at Jerusalem wrote for the use of the captives, though they had Ezekiel upon the spot with them, *chap.* xxix. so Ezekiel wrote for the use of Jerusalem, though Jeremiah himself was resident there; and yet they were far from looking upon it as an affront to one another, or an interfering with one another's business; for ministers have need of one another's help, both by preaching and writing. Jeremiah wrote to the captives for their consolation, which was the thing they needed; Ezekiel here is directed to write to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for their conviction and humiliation, which was the thing they needed: This is his commission, *ver.* 2. *Cause Jerusalem to know her abominations,* i. e. her sins; set them in order before her. Note, 1. Sins are not only provocations which God is angry at, but *abominations* which he hates, as contrary to his nature, and which we ought to hate, *Jer.* xliv. 4. 2. The sins of Jerusalem are in a special manner so. The practice of profaneness appears most odious in those that make a profession of religion. 3. Though Jerusalem is a place of great knowledge, yet she is loth *to know her abominations*; so partial are men in their own favours, that they are hardly made to see and own their own badness, but deny it, palliate or extenuate it. 4. It is requisite that we should know our sins, that we may confess them, and may justify God in what he brings upon us for them. 5. It is the work of ministers to cause sinners, sinners in Jerusalem, *to know their abominations*; to set before them the glass of the law, that in it they may see their own deformities and defilements; to tell them plainly of their faults; *Thou art the man.*

Now that Jerusalem may be made *to know her abominations,* and particularly the abominable ingratitude she had been guilty of, it was requisite she should be put in mind of the great things God had done for her, as the aggravations of her ill carriage towards him; and, to magnify those favours, she is in these verses made to know the meanness and baseness of her original, from what poor beginnings God raised her, and how unworthy she was of his favour, and of the honour he had put upon her. Jerusalem is here put for the Jewish church and nation, which is here compared to an outcast child, base born, and abandoned, which the mother her self has no affection or concern for.

1. The extraction of the Jewish nation was mean: *Thy birth is of the land of Canaan,* ver. 3. *i. e.* thou hadst from the very first the spirit and disposition of a Canaanite. The patriarchs dwelt in Canaan, and they were there but *strangers and sojourners,* had no possession, no power, not one foot of ground of their own, but a burying-place: Abraham and Sarah were indeed their *father and mother,* but they were only inmates with the Amorites and Hittites, who, having the dominion, seemed to be as parents to the seed of Abraham, witness the court Abraham made to the *children of Heth,* Gen. xxiii. 4, 8. and the dependence they had upon their neighbours the Canaanites, and the fear they were in of them, *Gen.* xiii. 7. xxxiv. 30. If the patriarchs at their first coming to Canaan had conquered it, and made themselves masters of it, it had put an honour upon their family, and had looked great in history, but, instead of that, they *went from one nation to another,* Psalm cv. 13. as tenants from one farm to another, almost as beggars from one door to another, when they *were but few in number,* yea, very few: And yet this was not the worst, their fathers had *served other gods in Ur of the Chaldees,* Josh. xxiv. 2. even in Jacob's family there were *strange gods,* Gen. xxxv. 2. Thus early had they a genius leading them to idolatry! and upon this account their ancestors were Amorites and Hittites.

2. When they first began to multiply, their condition was really very deplorable, like that of a new-born child, which must of necessity *die from the womb,* if *the knees prevent* it not, *Job* iii. 11, 12. The children of Israel, when they began to increase into a people, and became considerable, were thrown out from the country that was intended for them, a famine drove them thence, Egypt was *the open field,* into which they were cast; there they had no protection or countenance from the government they were under, but, on the contrary, were ruled with rigour, and their lives imbittered; they had no encouragement given them to build up their families, no help to build up their estates, no friends or allies to strengthen their interests; Joseph, that had been the shepherd and stone of Israel, was dead; the king of Egypt, that should have been kind to them for Joseph's sake, set himself to *destroy this manchild as soon as it was born,* Rev. xii. 4. ordered all the males to be slain, which, it is likely, occasioned the exposing of many, as well as Moses, to which, perhaps, the similitude here has reference. The founders of nations and cities had occasion for all the arts and arms they were masters of, set their heads on work, by policies and stratagems, to preserve and nurse up their infant states; *Tantæ molis erat Romanam condere gentem,* Virg. But the nation of Israel had no such care taken of it, no such pains taken with it, as Athens, Sparta, Rome, and other commonwealths had, when they were first founded, but, on the contrary, was doomed to destruction, like an infant new-born, exposed to wind and weather, *the navel-string not cut,* the poor babe *not washed,* not clothed, *not swaddled,* because not *pitied,* ver. 4, 5. Note, We owe the preservation of our infant-lives to that natural pity and compassion which the God of nature has put into the hearts of parents and nurses towards new-born children. This infant is said to be *cast out to the lothing of her person:* It was a sign she was lothed by those that bare her, and she appeared lothsome to all that looked upon her. *The Israelites were an abomination to the Egyptians,* as we find, *Gen.* xliii. 32. xlvi. 34.

Some think, this refers to the corrupt and vicious disposition of that people from their beginning: They were not only the weakest, and *fewest of all people,* Deut. vii. 7. but the worst and most ill-humoured of all people: *God giveth thee this good land, not for thy righteousness, for thou art a stiff-necked people,* Deut. ix. 6. and Moses tells them there, *ver.* 24. *You have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you.* They were not *supplied,* nor *washed,* nor *swaddled*; they were not at all tractable or manageable, nor cast into any good shape. God took them to be his people, not because he saw any thing in them inviting or promising, but *so it seemed good in his sight.* And it is a very apt illustration of the miserable condition of all the children of men by nature: *As for* our *nativity in the day that* we *were born,* we were shapen in iniquity, and conceived in sin, our understandings darkned, our minds alienated from the life of God, polluted with sin, which rendered us lothsome in the eyes of God: *Marvel not* then that we are told we *must be born again.*

6. ¶ And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee *when thou wast* in thy blood, Live: yea, I said unto thee *when thou wast* in thy blood, Live. 7. I have caused thee to multiply as the bud of the field, and thou hast increased and waxen great, and thou art come to excellent ornaments: *thy* breasts are fashioned, and thine hair is grown, whereas thou *wast* naked and bare. 8. Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time *was* the time of love, and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I sware unto thee, and entred into a covenant with thee, saith the LORD God, and thou becamest mine. 9. Then washed I thee with water: yea, I throughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil. 10. I clothed thee also with broidered work, and shod thee with badgers skin, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk. 11. I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thine hands, and a chain upon thy neck. 12. And I put a jewel on thy forehead, and ear-rings in thine

thine ears, and a beautiful crown upon thine head. 13. Thus waſt thou decked with gold and ſilver, and thy raiment *was of* fine linen, and ſilk, and broidered work; thou didſt eat fine flour, and honey, and oil: and thou waſt exceeding beautiful, and thou didſt proſper into a kingdom. 14. And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it *was* perfect through my comelineſs which I had put upon thee, ſaith the LORD God.

In theſe verſes we have an account of the great things which God did for the Jewiſh nation, in raiſing them up by degrees to be very conſiderable.

1. God ſaved them from the ruin they were upon the brink of in Egypt, *ver.* 6. *When I paſſed by thee, and ſaw thee polluted in thine own blood*, lothed and abandoned, and appointed to die, *as ſheep for the ſlaughter*, then *I ſaid unto thee, Live.* I deſigned thee for life when thou waſt doomed to deſtruction, and reſolved to ſave thee from death. Thoſe ſhall live, to whom God commands life. God looked upon the world of mankind, as thus caſt off, thus caſt out, thus polluted, thus weltering in blood, and his thoughts towards it were thoughts of good, deſigning it *life, and that more abundantly.* By converting grace, he ſaith to the ſoul, *Live.*

2. He looked upon them with kindneſs and a tender affection, not only pitied them, but *ſet his love upon them*, which was unaccountable, for there was nothing lovely in them; but *I looked upon thee*, and *behold, thy time was the time of love*, ver. 8. It was *the kindneſs and love of God our Saviour* that ſent Chriſt to redeem us, that ſends the Spirit to ſanctify us, that brought us out of a ſtate of nature into a ſtate of grace; that *was a time of love* indeed, diſtinguiſhing love, when God manifeſted his love to us, and courted our love to him! *Then was I in his eyes as one that found favour*, Cant. viii. 10.

3. He took them under his protection: *I ſpread my ſkirt over thee*, to ſhelter thee from wind and weather; and to *cover thy nakedneſs*, that the ſhame of it might not appear. Boaz *ſpread his ſkirt over* Ruth, in token of the ſpecial favour he deſigned her, *Ruth* iii. 9. God took them into his care, as an *eagle bears her young ones upon her wings*, Deut. xxxii. 11, 12. When God owned them for his people, and ſent Moſes to Egypt to deliver them, which was an expreſſion of the good-will of him *that dwelt in the buſh*, then he *ſpread his ſkirt over them.*

4. He cleared them from the reproachful character which their bondage in Egypt laid them under, *ver.* 9. *Then waſhed I thee with water*, to make thee clean, *and anointed thee with oil*, to make thee ſweet, and ſupple thee. All the diſgrace of their ſlavery was rolled away, when they were brought, *with a high hand, and a ſtretched out arm, into the glorious liberty of the children of God*; when God ſaid, *Iſrael is my ſon, my firſt-born: Let my people go, that they may ſerve me:* That word backed, as it was, with ſo many works of wonder, *throughly waſhed away their blood*; and when God led them under the convoy of *the pillar of cloud and fire*, he *ſpread his ſkirt over them.*

5. He multiplied them, and built them up into a people. This is here mentioned, *ver.* 7. before his *ſpreading his ſkirt over them*, becauſe *their numbers increaſed exceedingly*, while they were yet bond-ſlaves in Egypt; they *multiplied as the bud of the field* in ſpring-time, they *waxed great, exceeding mighty*, Exod. i. 7, 20. their *breaſts were faſhioned*, when they were formed into diſtinct tribes, and had officers of their own, *Exod.* v. 19. their *hair grew* when they grew numerous, *whereas* they had been *naked and bare*, very few, and therefore contemptible.

6. He admitted them into covenant with himſelf. See what glorious nuptials this poor forlorn infant is preferred to at laſt! how ſhe is dignified! who at firſt had ſcarce her life *given her for a prey. I ſware unto thee, and entred into covenant with thee*; this was done at mount Sinai, when the covenant between God and Iſrael was ſealed and ratified, then *thou becameſt mine:* God called them his people, and himſelf the God of Iſrael. Note, Thoſe to whom God gives ſpiritual life, he takes into covenant with himſelf; by that covenant they become his, his ſubjects and ſervants, that ſpeaks their duty; his portion, his treaſure, that ſpeaks their privilege; and it is *confirmed with an oath, that we might have ſtrong conſolation.*

7. He beautified and adorned them. This maid cannot forget her ornaments, and ſhe is gratified with abundance of them, *ver.* 10, 11, 12, 13. We need not be particular in the application of theſe, her wardrobe was well furniſhed with rich apparel, they had *embroidered work* to wear, ſhoes of fine *badgers ſkins*, *linen* girdles, and *ſilk* veils, *bracelets* and *necklaces*, *jewels* and *ear-rings*, and even *a beautiful crown*, or coronet; perhaps, this may refer to the jewels and other rich goods which they took from the Egyptians, which might well be ſpoken of thus long after as a merciful circumſtance of their deliverance, when it was ſpoken of long before, *Gen.* xv. 14. *They ſhall come out with great ſubſtance.* Or, it may be taken figuratively for all thoſe bleſſings of heaven which adorned both their church and ſtate: In a little time they came to *excellent ornaments*, ver. 7. The laws and ordinances which God gave them, were to them as *ornaments of grace to the head, and chains about the neck*, Prov. i. 9. God's ſanctuary, which he ſets up among them, was *a beautiful crown upon their head*; it was the *beauty of holineſs.*

8. He fed them with abundance, with plenty, with dainty, *Thou didſt eat fine flour, and honey, and oil*, manna, angels food, *honey out of the rock, oil out of the flinty rock:* in Canaan they did eat bread to the full, the fineſt of the wheat, *Deut.* xxxii. 13, 14. Thoſe whom God takes into covenant with himſelf are fed with the bread of life, clothed with the robe of righteouſneſs, adorned with the graces and comforts of the Spirit, the *hidden man of the heart is that which is incorruptible.*

9. He gave them a great reputation among their neighbours, and made them conſiderable; acceptable to their friends and allies, and formidable to their adverſaries. *Thou didſt proſper into a kingdom*, ver. 13. which ſpeaks both dignity and dominion; and *ver.* 14. *Thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty*, the nations about had their eye upon them and admired them for the excellent laws by which they were governed, the privilege they had of acceſs to God, *Deut.* iv. 7, 8. *Solomon*'s wiſdom, and *Solomon*'s temple were very much *the renown* of that nation; and if we put all the privileges of the *Jewiſh* church and kingdom together, we muſt own, it was the moſt *accompliſhed beauty* of all the nations of the earth; the beauty of it was *perfect*, you could not name the thing that would be the honour of a people, but it was to be found in *Iſrael*, in *David*'s and *Solomon*'s time, when that kingdom was in its *zenith*; piety, learning, wiſdom, juſtice, victory, peace, wealth, and all ſure to continue if they had kept cloſe to God. *It was perfect, ſaith God, through my comelineſs which I had put upon thee*, i. e. through the beauty of their holineſs, as they were a people ſet apart for God, and devoted to him, to be to him *for a name, and for a praiſe, and for a glory.* This was it that put a luſtre upon all their other honours, and was indeed the perfection of their beauty. We may apply this ſpiritually; ſanctified ſouls are truly beautiful, they are ſo in God's ſight, and they themſelves may take the comfort of it. But God muſt have all the glory, for they were by nature deformed and polluted, and whatever *comelineſs* they have, it is that which *God has put upon them*, and beautified them with, and he will be well-pleaſed with the work of his own hands.

15. ¶ But thou didſt truſt in thine own beauty, and playedſt the harlot becauſe of thy renown, and pouredſt out thy fornications on every one that paſſed by: his it was. 16. And of thy garments thou didſt take, and deckedſt thy high places with divers colours, and playedſt the harlot thereupon: *the like things* ſhall not come, neither ſhall it be *ſo.* 17. Thou haſt alſo taken thy fair jewels of my gold and of my ſilver, which I had given thee, and madeſt to thy ſelf images of men, and didſt commit whoredom with them, 18. And tookeſt thy broidered garments, and coveredſt them: and thou haſt ſet mine oil and mine incenſe before them. 19. My meat alſo which I gave thee, fine flour, and oil, and honey *wherewith* I fed thee, thou haſt even ſet it before them for a ſweet ſavour: and *thus* it was, ſaith the LORD God. 20. Moreover, thou haſt taken thy ſons and thy daughters, whom thou haſt born unto me, and theſe thou haſt ſacrificed unto them, to be devoured: *is this* of thy whoredoms a ſmall matter, 21. That thou haſt ſlain my children, and delivered them to cauſe them to paſs through *the fire* for them? 22. And in all thy abominations and thy whoredoms thou haſt not remembred the days of thy youth, when thou waſt naked and bare, *and* waſt polluted in thy blood. 23. And it came to paſs after all thy wickedneſs (wo, wo unto thee, ſaith the LORD God) 24. *That* thou haſt alſo built unto thee an eminent place, and haſt made thee an high place in every ſtreet. 25. Thou haſt built thy high place at every head of the way, and haſt made thy beauty to be abhorred, and haſt opened thy feet to every one that paſſed by, and multiplied thy whoredoms. 26. Thou haſt alſo committed fornication with the Egyptians thy neighbours, great of fleſh, and haſt increaſed thy whoredoms, to provoke me to anger. 27. Behold therefore, I have ſtretched out my hand over thee, and have diminiſhed thine ordinary *food*, and delivered thee unto the will of them that hate thee, the daughters of the Philiſtines *which are* aſhamed of thy lewd way. 28. Thou haſt played the whore with the Aſſyrians, becauſe thou waſt unſatiable: yea, thou haſt played the harlot with them, and yet couldeſt not be ſatisfied. 29. Thou haſt moreover multiplied thy fornication in the land of Canaan unto Chaldea, and yet thou waſt not ſatisfied herewith.

30. How,

30. How weak is thine heart, ſaith the LORD God, ſeeing thou doſt all theſe *things*, the work of an imperious whoriſh woman? 31. In that thou buildeſt thine eminent place in the head of every way, and makeſt thine high place in every ſtreet, and haſt not been as an harlot (in that thou ſcorneſt hire.) 32. *But as* a wife that committeth adultery, *which* taketh ſtrangers inſtead of her husband. 33. They give gifts to all whores, but thou giveſt thy gifts to all thy lovers, and hireſt them that they may come unto thee on every ſide for thy whoredom. 34. And the contrary is in thee from *other* women in thy whoredoms, whereas none followeth thee to commit whoredoms: and in that thou giveſt a reward, and no reward is given unto thee; therefore thou art contrary.

In theſe verſes we have an account of the great wickedneſs of the people of Iſrael, eſpecially in worſhipping idols, notwithſtanding the great favours that God had conferred upon them, by which, one would think, they ſhould have been for ever engaged to him. This wickedneſs of theirs is here repreſented by the lewd and ſcandalous converſation of that beautiful maid which was reſcued from ruin, brought up and well provided for by a kind friend and benefactor, that had been in all reſpects as a father, and a husband to her.

1. Their idolatry was the great provoking ſin that they were guilty of; it began in the latter end of Solomon's time (for from Samuel's till then I do not remember that we read any thing of it) and from thence continued more or leſs the crying ſin of that nation till the captivity; and though it now and then met with ſome check from the reforming kings, yet it was never totally ſuppreſſed, and for the moſt part appear'd to a high degree impudent and barefaced. They not only worſhipped the true God by images, as the ten tribes by the calves at Dan and Bethel, but they worſhipped falſe gods, Baal and Moloch, and all the ſenſeleſs rabble of the pagan deities.

2. This is that which is here all along repreſented (as often elſewhere) under the ſimilitude of whoredom and adultery. 1. Becauſe it is the violation of a marriage-covenant with God, forſaking him, and embracing the boſom of a ſtranger; it is giving that affection and ſervice to his rivals which are due to him alone. 2. Becauſe it is the corrupting and defiling of the mind, and the enſlaving of the ſpiritual part of the man, and ſubjecting it to the power and dominion of ſenſe, as whoredom is. 3. Becauſe it debaucheth the conſcience, ſears and hardens it, and thoſe who by their idolatries diſhonour the divine narure, and change the truth of God into a lye, and his glory into ſhame; God juſtly puniſheth by giving them over to a reprobate mind to diſhonour the human nature with vile affections, *Rom.* i. 23, *&c.* It is a beſotting, bewitching ſin, and when men are given up to it they ſeldom recover themſelves out of the ſnare. 4. Becauſe it is a ſhameful, ſcandalous ſin, for thoſe that have joined themſelves to the Lord, to join themſelves to an idol. Now obſerve here,

1. What were the cauſes of this ſin; how came the people of God to be drawn away to the ſervice of idols, how came a virgin ſo well taught, ſo well educated, to be debauched? Who would have thought it? But, 1. They grew proud, *ver.* 15. *Thou truſtedſt to thy beauty*, and didſt expect that, that ſhould make thee an intereſt, and didſt *play the harlot becauſe of thy renown.* They thought becauſe they were ſo complimented and admired by their neighbours, that further to ingratiate themſelves with them, and return their compliments, they muſt join with them in their worſhip, and conform themſelves to their uſages. Solomon admitted idolatry to gratify his wives and their relations. Note, Abundance of young people are ruined by pride, and particularly pride in their beauty, *Rara eſt concordia formæ atque pudicitiæ.* 2. They forgot their beginning, ver. 22. *Thou haſt not remembred the days of thy youth*, how poor, and mean, and deſpicable thou waſt, and what great things God did for thee, and what laſting obligations he laid upon thee thereby. Note, It would be an effectual check to our pride and ſenſuality to conſider what we are, and how much we are beholden to the free grace of God. 3. They were weak, in underſtanding and in reſolution, ver. 30. *How weak is thy heart, ſeeing thou doſt all theſe things?* Note, The ſtrength of mens luſts is an evidence of the weakneſs of their hearts; they have no acquaintance with themſelves, nor government of themſelves. She is weak, and yet an imperious whoriſh woman. Note, Thoſe that are moſt fooliſh are commonly moſt imperious, and think themſelves fit to manage others when they are far from being able to manage themſelves.

2. What were the particulars of it.

(1.) They worſhipped all the idols that came in their way; all that they were ever courted to the worſhip of; they were at the beck of all their neighbours, ver. 15. *Thou pouredſt out thy fornications on every one that paſſed by, his it was.* They were ready to cloſe with every temptation of this kind, though never ſo abſurd. No foreign idol ſhould be imported, no new god invented, but they were ready to catch at it; as a common ſtrumpet that proſtitutes herſelf to all comers, and *multiplies her whoredoms*, ver. 25. Thus ſome common drunkards will be company for every one that puts up the finger to them; how weak are the hearts of ſuch!

(2.) They adorned their idol-temples, and groves, and high-places with the fine rich clothing that God had given them, *ver.* 16, 18. *Thou deckedſt thy high-places with divers colours*, with the coats of divers colours, like Joſeph's, which God had given them as particular marks of his favour, and *haſt played the harlot*, i. e. worſhipped idols *thereupon*; of this he ſaith, *The like things ſhall not come, neither ſhall it be ſo*, i. e. This is a thing by no means to be ſuffered; I will never endure ſuch practices as theſe, without ſhewing my reſentments.

(3.) They made images for worſhip, of the jewels which God had given them, *ver.* 17. *the jewels of my gold and my ſilver which I had given thee.* Note, It is God that gives us our *gold* and *ſilver*; the products of trade, of art and induſtry, are the gifts of God's providence to us, as well as the fruits of the earth. And what God gives us the uſe of he ſtill retains a property in, it is *my ſilver* and *my gold*, though I have *given it thee.* It is *his* ſtill, ſo as that we ought to ſerve and honour him with it, and are accountable to him for the diſpoſal of it. Every penny has God's image upon it as well as Cæſar's. Would we make our *ſilver* and *gold*, our plate, money, jewels, the matter of our pride and contention, our covetouſneſs, and prodigality, if we duly conſidered that it is *God's ſilver*, and *his gold*? The Iſraelites began betimes to turn their jewels into idols, when Aaron made the golden calf of their earrings.

(4.) They ſerved their idols with the good things which God gave them for their own uſe, and to ſerve him with, *ver.* 18. *Thou haſt ſet mine oil and mine incenſe before them*, upon their altars, as perfumes to theſe dunghil deities; *my meat, and fine flour and oil*, and that honey which Canaan flowed with, and *wherewith I fed thee*, thou haſt regaled them, and their hungry prieſts with; haſt made an offering of it to them, for *a ſweet ſavour*, to purify them, and procure acceptance with them: And *thus it was, ſaith the Lord God*; it is too plain to be denied, too bad to be excuſed. *Theſe things thou haſt done.* He that knows all things knows it. See how fond they were of their idols, that they would part with that which was given them for the neceſſary ſubſiſtence of themſelves and their families to honour them with; which may ſhame our niggardlineſs and ſtrait-handedneſs in the ſervice of the true and living God.

(5.) They had ſacrificed their children to their idols. This is inſiſted upon here, and often elſewhere, as one of the worſt inſtances of their idolatry, as indeed there was none in which the devil triumphed ſo much over the children of men, both their natural reaſon, and their natural affection, as in this. See *Jer.* vii. 31.--xix. 5.--xxxii. 35. *Thou haſt taken thy ſons and thy daughters*, and not only made them to paſs through the fire, or between two fires, in token of their being dedicated to Moloch, but thou haſt *ſacrificed them to be devoured*, ver. 20. Never was there ſuch an inſtance of the degenerating of the paternal authority into the moſt barbarous tyranny as this was: Yet that was not the worſt of it, it was an irreparable wrong to God himſelf, who challenged a ſpecial property in their children, more than in their gold and ſilver, and their meat, they are *my children*, ver. 21. the *ſons and daughters which thou haſt born unto me*, ver. 20. He is the *Father of ſpirits*, and rational ſouls are in a particular manner his, and therefore the taking away of life, human life unjuſtly is a mighty affront to the *God of life.* But the children of Iſraelites were his by a further right, they were the *children of the covenant*; born in God's houſe, he had ſaid to Abraham, *I will be a God to thee and to thy ſeed*; they had the ſeal of the covenant in their fleſh from eight days old, they were to bear God's name and keep up his church; to murther them was in the higheſt degree *inhumane*, but to murther them in honour of an idol was in the higheſt degree *impious.* One cannot think of it withour the utmoſt indignation; to ſee the pitileſs hands of the parents ſhedding the guiltleſs blood of their own children, and by offering thoſe pieces of themſelves to the devil for dying ſacrifices, openly avowing the offering up of themſelves to him for living ſacrifices. How abſurd was this, that the children which were *born to God* ſhould be *ſacrificed to devils!* Note, The children of parents that are members of the viſible church are to be looked upon as *born unto God*, and *his children*; as ſuch and under that character we are to love them, and pray for them, bring them up for him, and if he calls for them, chearfully part with them to him, for *may he not do what he will with his own?* Upon this inſtance of their idolatry, which indeed ought not to paſs without a particular brand, this remark is made, *ver.* 20. *Is this of thy whoredoms a ſmall matter?* Which intimates, there were thoſe that made a ſmall matter of it, and turned it into a jeſt. Note, There is no ſin ſo heinous, which men of profligate conſciences will not *make a mock at.* But is whoredom, is ſpiritual whoredom a ſmall matter? Is it a ſmall mat[illegible] for men to make their children brutes, and the devil their god? It will be a great matter ſhortly.

(6.) They

(6.) They built temples in honour of their idols, that others might be invited to resort thither, and join with them in the worship of their idols. *After all thy wickedness* of this kind committed in private, (for which, *wo, wo unto thee*, that comes in in a sad parenthesis, speaking those in a woful condition that are going on in sin, and giving them warning in time, if they would but take it) thou hast at length arrived to such a pitch of impudence, as to proclaim it; Thou hast long had a whore's heart, but now thou art come to have a whore's forehead, and cannot blush, *ver.* 23, 24, 25. *Thou hast built there an eminent place*, a *brothel-house*, so the margin reads it, and such their idol temples were. *Thou hast made thee a high place* for one idol or other, *in every street*, and *at every head of the way*; and again, *ver.* 31. They did all they could to seduce and debauch others, and to spread the contagion, by making the temptations to idolatry as strong as possibly they could; and hereby the ring-leaders in idolatry did but *make themselves vile*, and even those that had courted them to it, finding themselves outdone by them, began to be surfeited with the abundance and violence of their idolatries, *thou hast made thy beauty to be abhorred*, even by those that had admired it. The Jewish nation by leaving their own God, and doting on the gods of the nations round about them, had made themselves mean and despicable in the eyes even of their heathen neighbours: much more was their *beauty abhorred* by all that were wise and good, and had any concern for the honour of God and religion. Note, Those shame themselves that bring a reproach on their profession. And justly will that beauty, that excellency, at length, be made the object of others loathing, which men have made the matter of their own pride.

3. What were the aggravations of this sin.

1. They were fond of the idols of those nations which had been their oppressors and persecutors. As, (1.) The Egyptians, they were a people notorious for idolatry, and for the most sottish senseless idolatries; they had of old abused them by their barbarous dealings, and of late by their treacherous dealings, were always either cruel or false to them, and yet so infatuated were they that *they committed fornication with the Egyptians their neighbours*, not only by joining with them in their idolatries, but entering into leagues and alliances with them, and depending upon them for help in their straits, which was an adulterous departure from God. (2.) The Assyrians, they had also been vexatious to Israel, and yet *thou hast played the whore with them*, ver. 28. tho' they lived at a greater distance, yet thou hast entertained their idols, and their superstitious usages; and so *hast multiplied thy fornications unto Chaldea*, hast borrowed images of gods, patterns of altars, rites of sacrificing, and one foolery or other of that kind, from that remote country, that enemy's country, and hast imported them *into the land of Canaan*, enfranchised and established them there. Thus Mr George Herbert long since foretold, or feared at least;

That Sein shall swallow Tyber, and the Thames
By letting in them both pollute her streams.

2. They had been under the rebukes of providence for their sins, and yet they persisted in them, *ver.* 27. *I have stretched out my hand over thee*, to threaten and frighten thee, so God did before he *laid his hand upon them* to ruin and destroy them; and that is his usual method, to try to bring men to repentance first by lesser judgments; he did so here. Before he brought such a famine upon them as broke the staff of bread, he *diminished their ordinary food*, cut them short, before he cut them off. When the overplus is abused, it is just with God to diminish that which is for necessity. Before he delivered them to the Chaldeans to be destroyed, he delivered them *to the daughters of the Philistines* to be ridiculed, for their idolatries; for they hated them, and tho' they were idolaters themselves, yet were ashamed of the lewd way of the Israelites, who were grown more profane in their idolatries than any of their neighbours; who changed their God, whereas other nations did not change theirs, *Jer.* ii. 10, 11. for this they were justly chastised by the Philistines. Or it may refer to the inroads which the Philistines made upon the south of Judah in the reign of Ahaz, by which it was weakened and impoverished, and which was the beginning of sorrows to them, 2 *Chron.* xxviii. 18. but they did not take warning by those judgments, and therefore were justly abandoned to ruin at last. Note, In the account which impenitent sinners shall be called to, they will be told not only of the mercies for which they have been ungrateful, but of the afflictions under which they have been incorrigible, *Amos* iv. 11.

3. They were insatiable in their spiritual whoredom; thou *couldest not be satisfied*, ver. 28. and again, *ver.* 29. when they had multiplied their idols, and superstitious usages beyond measure, yet still they were enquiring after new gods, and new fashions in worship. They that in sincerity join themselves to the true God find enough in him for their satisfaction; and tho' they still desire more of God, yet they never desire more than God; but they that forsake this living fountain for broken cisterns will find themselves soon surfeited but never satisfied; have soon enough of the gods they have, and are still inquiring after more.

4. They were at great expence upon their idolatry, and laid out a great deal of wealth in purchasing patterns of images and altars, and hiring priests to attend upon them from other countries: Harlots generally had their hires, but this impudent adulteress, instead of being hired to serve idols, hired idols to protect her, and accept her homage. This is much insisted on, *ver.* 31, 32, 33, 34. In this respect *the contrary is in thee from other women in thy whoredoms:* Others are courted, but thou makest court to those that do not follow thee; art fond of making leagues and alliances with those heathen nations that despise thee; others have gifts given them, but thou givest thy gifts, *i. e.* the gifts which God has graciously given thee, to thine idols; herein like a wife that commits adultery, not for gain, as harlots do, but purely for the sin's sake. Note, Spiritual lusts, those of the mind, such as theirs after idols were, are oftentimes as strong and impetuous as any carnal lusts are. And it is a great aggravation of sin when men are their own tempters, and instead of proposing to themselves any worldly advantage by it are at great expence upon it, such are *transgressors without cause*, Psal. xxv. 3. wicked transgressors indeed.

And now is not Jerusalem in all this made to know her abominations? for what greater abominations could she be guilty of than these? Here we may see with wonder and horror what the corrupt nature of men is when God leaves them to themselves, yea tho' they have the greatest advantages to be better and do better. And the way of sin is down-hill. *Nitimur in vetitum.*

35. ¶ Wherefore, O harlot, hear the word of the LORD. 36. Thus saith the Lord GOD, Because thy filthiness was poured out, and thy nakedness discovered through thy whoredoms with thy lovers, and with all the idols of thy abominations, and by the blood of thy children, which thou didst give unto them; 37. Behold therefore, I will gather all thy lovers, with whom thou hast taken pleasure, and all *them* that thou hast loved, with all *them* that thou hast hated: I will even gather them round about against thee, and will discover thy nakedness unto them, that they may see all thy nakedness. 38. And I will judge thee, as women that break wedlock, and shed blood, are judged, and I will give thee blood in fury and jealousy. 39. And I will also give thee into their hand, and they shall throw down thine eminent place, and shall break down thy high places: they shall strip thee also of thy clothes, and shall take thy fair jewels, and leave thee naked and bare. 40. They shall also bring up a company against thee, and they shall stone thee with stones, and thrust thee through with their swords. 41. And they shall burn thine houses with fire, and execute judgments upon thee in the sight of many women: and I will cause thee to cease from playing the harlot, and thou also shalt give no hire any more. 42. So will I make my fury towards thee to rest, and my jealousy shall depart from thee, and I will be quiet, and will be no more angry. 43. Because thou hast not remembred the days of thy youth, but hast fretted me in all these *things*; behold therefore, I also will recompense thy way upon *thine* head, saith the Lord GOD, and thou shalt not commit this lewdness, above all thine abominations.

Adultery was by the law of Moses made a capital crime; this notorious adulteress, the criminal at the bar, being in the foregoing verses found guilty, here hath sentence passed upon her. It is ushered in with solemnity, *ver.* 35. The prophet as the judge in God's name calls to her, *O harlot, hear the word of the Lord.* Our Saviour preached to harlots, for their conversion, to bring them into the kingdom of God, not as the prophet here to expel them out of it. Note, An apostate church is a harlot; Jerusalem is so if she become idolatrous; *how is the faithful city become a harlot!* Rome is so represented in the Revelation, then when it is marked for ruin, as Jerusalem here, *Rev.* xvii. 1. *Come, and I will shew thee the judgments of the great whore.* And those who will not hear the commanding word of the Lord and obey it, shall be made to hear the condemning word of the Lord and shall tremble at it. Let us attend while judgment is given.

1. The crime is repeated and the articles of the charge summed up, *ver.* 36. and (as is usual) aggravated, *ver.* 43. for when God speaks in wrath he will be justified, and clear when he judgeth, clear when he is judged; and sinners when they are condemned shall have their sins so set in order before them, that their mouth shall be stopped, and they shall not have a word to

object against the equity of the sentence. The crimes which this harlot stands convicted of, and is now to be condemned for, are, (1.) The violation of the two first commandments of the first table, by *idolatry*; which is here called her *whoredoms with her lovers*, so she called them, *Hos.* ii. 12. because she loved them as if they had been indeed her benefactors; that is, with *all the idols of her abominations*, the abominable idols which she served and worshipped. This was the sin which provoked God to jealousy. (2.) The violation of the two first commandments of the second table, by the murder of their own innocent infants; *the blood of thy children which thou didst give unto them.* It is not strange if those that have cast off God, and his fear, break through the strongest and most sacred bonds of natural affection.

The sins are aggravated from the consideration, (1.) Of the dishonour they had thereby done to themselves; hereby *thy filthiness was poured out*, i. e. The uncleanness that was in thy heart was hereby discovered, and brought to light, and thy nakedness was exposed to view, and thou thereby exposed to contempt. God is displeased with his professing people for shaming themselves by their sins. (2.) Their base ingratitude is another aggravation of their sins, *Thou hast not remembred the days of thy youth*, and the kindness that was done thee then, when otherwise thou hadst perished, *ver.* 43. And, (3.) The vexation which their sins gave to God, whom they ought to have pleased; *thou hast fretted me in all these things*, not only angred me, but grieved me; it is a strange expression, and one would think enough to melt a heart of stone; that the great God who cannot admit any uneasiness is pleased to speak of the sins and follies of his professing people as *fretting to him, forty years long was I grieved with this generation.*

2. The sentence is passed. In general, *I will judge thee as women that break wedlock, and shed blood are judged*, ver. 38. and those two crimes were punished with death, with an ignominious death. Thou hast *shed blood*, and therefore I will *give thee blood*; thou hast *broken wedlock*, and therefore I will give it thee, not only in justice but in jealousy, not only as a righteous judge, but as an injured and incensed husband, who *will not spare in the day of vengeance*, Prov. vi. 34, 35. He will *recompense their way upon their head*, ver. 43. In all the judgments God executeth upon sinners we must see *their own way recompensed upon their head*; they are dealt with not only as they deserved, but as they procured; it is the end which their sin, as a way, had a direct tendency to. More particularly,

(1.) This criminal must be (as is usually done with criminals) exposed to publick shame, *ver.* 37. Malefactors are not executed privately, but are made a spectacle to the world; care is here taken to bring spectators together, *all them that thou hast loved, with whom thou hast taken pleasure*, they shall come to be witnesses of the execution, that they may take warning, and prevent their own like ruin; and these also *whom thou hast hated*, who will insult over thee, and triumph in thy fall. Both ways the calamities of Jerusalem will be aggravated, that they will be the grief of her friends, and the joy of her foes. These shall not only be gathered *around her*, but *gathered against her*; even those with whom she took unlawful pleasure, with whom she contracted unlawful leagues, the Egyptians and Assyrians shall now contribute to her ruin. As *when a man's ways please the Lord he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him*, so when a man's ways displease the Lord he maketh even his friends to be at war with him; and justly makes those a scourge and a plague to sinners, and instruments of their destruction, who were their tempters, and with whom they were partakers in wickedness. Those whom they have suffered to strip them of their virtue shall see them stripped; and perhaps help to strip them, of all their other ornaments; to *see the nakedness of the land* will they come. It is added to the same purpose, *ver.* 41. *I will execute judgments upon thee in the sight of many women*, thou shalt be made an example of, *in terrorem*, that others may see and fear, and do no more presumptuously.

(2.) The criminal is *condemned to die*, for her sins are such as death is the wages of, *ver.* 40. *They shall bring up a company*, *i. e.* a company shall be brought up against thee, and *they shall stone thee with stones*, and *thrust thee through with their swords*, so great a death, so many deaths in one is this adultereſs adjudged to. When the walls of Jerusalem were battered down with stones shot against them, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem were put to the sword, then this sentence was executed in the letter of it.

(3.) The estate of the criminal is *confiscated*, and all that belonged to her destroyed with her, *ver.* 39. *They shall throw down thine eminent place*, and, *ver.* 41. they *shall burn thine houses*, as the habitations of ill women are destroyed in detestation of their lewdness. Their high places erected in honour of their idols, by which they thought to ingratiate themselves with their neighbours shall be an offence to them, and even they shall *break them down*. It was long the complaint even in some of the best reigns of the kings of Judah, that *the high places were not taken away*, but now the army of the Chaldeans when they lay all waste shall break them down; if iniquity be not taken away by the justice of the nation, it shall be taken away by the judgments of God upon the nation.

(4.) Thus both the sin and the sinners shall be abolished together, and an end put to both. *Thou shalt cease from playing the harlot*, i. e. there shall be no remainders of idolatry in the land, because the inhabitants shall be wholly extirpated, and they shall *give no more hire*, because they have no more to give. Some that will not leave their sins live till their sins leave them. When all that with which they honoured their idols is taken from them, they shall not *give hire any more*, ver. 41. Then *thou shalt not commit this lewdness* of sacrificing thy children, which was a crime provoking *above all thine abominations*, for thy children shall all be cut off by the sword, or carried into captivity, so that thou shalt have none to sacrifice, *ver.* 43. Or, it may be meant of the reformation of those of them that escape and survive the punishment, they shall take warning, and shall *do no more presumptuously.* The captivity in Babylon made the people of Israel to cease for ever *from playing the harlot*, it effectually cured them of their inclination to idolatry, and then all shall be well, when this is the fruit, even the *taking away of sin*, then, *ver.* 42. *my jealousy shall depart, I will be quiet, and no more angry.* When we begin to be *at war with sin* God will be *at peace with us*; for he continues the affliction no longer than till it has done its work. When sin departs God's *jealousy will soon depart*, for he is never jealous but when we give him just cause to be so. Yet some understand this as a threatning of utter ruin, that God will *make a full end*, and the fire of his anger shall burn as long as there is any fuel for it. *His fury shall rest upon them* and not remove, compare this with that doom of unbelievers, *John* iii. 36. *the wrath of God abideth on them.* They shall drink the dregs of the cup, and then God will be *no more angry*, for he is *eased of his adversaries*, Isa. i. 24. is satisfied in the abandoning of them, and therefore will be *no more angry*, because there are no more for his anger to fasten upon. They had *fretted* him, when judgment and mercy were contesting, but now *he is quiet*; as he will be in the eternal damnation of sinners; wherein he will be glorified, and therefore he will be satisfied.

44. ¶ Behold, every one that useth proverbs, shall use *this* proverb against thee, saying, As *is* the mother, *so is* her daughter. 45. Thou *art* thy mothers daughter, that lotheth her husband and her children, and thou *art* the sister of thy sisters, which lothed their husbands and their children: your mother *was* an Hittite, and your father an Amorite. 46. And thine elder sister *is* Samaria, she and her daughters that dwell at thy left hand: and thy younger sister that dwelleth at thy right hand, *is* Sodom and her daughters. 47. Yet hast thou not walked after their ways, nor done after their abominations: but as *if that were* a very little *thing*, thou wast corrupted more than they in all thy ways. 48. *As* I live, saith the Lord GOD, Sodom thy sister hath not done, she nor her daughters, as thou hast done, thou and thy daughters. 49. Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. 50. And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me: therefore I took them away as I saw *good.* 51. Neither hath Samaria committed half of thy sins; but thou hast multiplied thine abominations more than they, and hast justified thy sisters in all thine abominations which thou hast done. 52. Thou also which hast judged thy sisters, bear thine own shame for thy sins that thou hast committed more abominable than they: they are more righteous than thou: yea, be thou confounded also, and bear thy shame, in that thou hast justified thy sisters. 53. When I shall bring again their captivity, the captivity of Sodom and her daughters, and the captivity of Samaria and her daughters, then *will I bring again* the captivity of thy captives in the midst of them: 54. That thou mayst bear thine own shame, and mayst be confounded in all that thou hast done, in that thou art a comfort unto them. 55. When thy sisters, Sodom and her daughters, shall return to their former estate, and Samaria and her daughters shall return to their former estate, then thou and thy daughters shall return to your former estate. 56. For thy sister Sodom was not mentioned by thy mouth in the day of thy pride: 57. Before thy wickedness was discovered, as at the time of *thy* reproach of the daughters of Syria, and all *that are* round about her, the daughters of the Philistines, which despise thee

thee round about. 58. Thou haſt born thy lewdneſs, and thine abominations, ſaith the LORD. 59. For thus ſaith the Lord GOD, I will even deal with thee as thou haſt done: which haſt deſpiſed the oath in breaking the covenant.

The prophet here further ſhews Jeruſalem her abominations, by comparing her with thoſe places that had gone before her, and ſhewing that ſhe was worſe than any of them; and therefore ſhould like them be utterly and irreparably ruined. We are all apt to judge of our ſelves by compariſon, and to imagine that we are ſufficiently good, if we are but as good as ſuch and ſuch that were thought paſſable; or that we are not dangerouſly bad if we be no worſe than ſuch and ſuch, who tho' bad were not of the worſt. Now God by the prophet ſhews Jeruſalem,

1. That ſhe was as bad as *her mother*, i. e. as the accurſed devoted Canaanites that were the poſſeſſors of this land before her. They that uſe proverbs, as moſt people do, ſhall apply that proverb to Jeruſalem, *as is the mother, ſo is her daughter*, ver. 44. She is even *mother's own child*, the Jews are as like the Canaanites in temper and inclination as if they had been their own children. The character of the mother was, that ſhe *loathed her husband and her children*, ſhe had all the marks of an adultereſs, and that is the character of the daughter, ſhe forſakes the *guide of her youth*, and is barbarous to the *children* of her own bowels. When God brought Iſrael into Canaan he particularly warned them not to do according to the abominations of *the men of that land, who went before them*, for which *it had ſpued them out*, Lev. xviii. 27, 28. the monuments of whoſe idolatry, with the remains of the idolaters themſelves would be a continual temptation to them; but they learned their way, and trod in their ſteps, and were as well affected to the *idols of Canaan* as ever they were, *Pſal.* cvi. 38. and thus in reſpect of imitation it might truly be ſaid, that *their mother* was a *Hittite*, and their *father* an *Amorite*, ver. 45. for they reſembled them more than Abraham and Sarah.

2. That ſhe was worſe than her ſiſters Sodom and Samaria, that were adultereſſes too, that *loathed their husbands and their children*, that were weary of the gods of their fathers, and were for introducing new gods, *a-la-mode*, that came newly up, and new faſhions in religion, and were given to change. On this compariſon between Jeruſalem and *her ſiſters* the prophet here enlargeth, that he might either ſhame them into repentance, or juſtify God in their ruin. Obſerve,

1. Who Jeruſalem's ſiſters were, *ver.* 45. Samaria and Sodom. Samaria is called the *elder*, or rather the *greater*, ſiſter, becauſe it was a much larger city and kingdom, richer and more conſiderable, and more nearly allied to Iſrael; if Jeruſalem look northward this is partly *on her left hand*; this city of Samaria, and the towns and villages that were as *daughters* to that *mother city*; theſe had been *lately* deſtroyed for their *ſpiritual whoredom*; Sodom and the adjacent towns and villages that were her daughters, dwelt at Jeruſalem's *right hand*, and was her *leſſer ſiſter*; leſs than Jerſualem; leſs than Samaria, and theſe were of old deſtroyed for their corporeal whoredom, *Jude* 7.

2. Wherein Jeruſalem's ſins reſembled her ſiſters, particularly Sodom's, *ver.* 49. *This was the iniquity of Sodom*; it is implied, and this is *thine* iniquity too, *pride, fulneſs of bread, and abundance of idleneſs*; their *going after ſtrange fleſh*, which was Sodom's moſt flagrant wickedneſs, is not mentioned, becauſe notoriouſly known: But thoſe ſins which did not look ſo black, but opened the door and led the way to theſe more enormous crimes, and began to fill that meaſure of her ſins which was filled up at length by their unnatural filthineſs. Now theſe initiating ſins were, (1.) *Pride*, in which the heart lifts up itſelf above and againſt both God and man; pride was the firſt ſin that turned angels into devils, and the *garden of the Lord* into a *hell upon earth*. It was the *pride* of the Sodomites that they deſpiſed *righteous Lot*, and would not bear to be reproved by him, and this ripened them for ruin. (2.) *Gluttony*, here called *fulneſs of bread*. It was God's great mercy that they had plenty, but their great ſin that they abuſed it, glutted themſelves with it, eat to exceſs, and drank to exceſs, and made that the gratification of their luſts which was given them to be the ſupport of their lives. (3.) *Idleneſs, abundance of idleneſs*, a dread of labour and a love of eaſe. Their country was fruitful, and the abundance they had they came eaſily by, which was a temptation to them to indulge themſelves in ſloth, which diſpoſed them to all that abominable filthineſs which kindled their flames. Note, Idleneſs is an inlet to much ſin; the men of Sodom that were idle were *wicked*, and *ſinners before the Lord exceedingly*, Gen. xiii. 13. The ſtanding waters gather filth, and the ſitting bird is the fowler's mark. When David *roſe from off his bed at evening* he ſaw Bathſheba—*Quæritur, Egiſtheus quare ſit factus Adulter, in promptu cauſa eſt, deſidioſus erat.*— (4.) *Oppreſſion*, neither did ſhe *ſtrengthen the hands of the poor and needy*; probably it is implied, that ſhe *weakened* their hands, and *broke* their arms, however it was bad enough, that when ſhe had ſo much wealth, and conſequently power, and intereſt, and leiſure, ſhe did nothing for the relief of the poor; in providing for whoſe wants thoſe that themſelves are *full of bread* may employ their time well, they need not be ſo abundantly idle, as too often they are. Theſe were the ſins of the Sodomites, and theſe were Jeruſalem's ſins; their *pride*, the cauſe of their ſins, is mentioned again, *ver.* 50. *they were haughty*; with the horrid effects of their ſins, their *abominations* which they *committed before God*. Men arrive gradually to the height of impiety and wickedneſs; *nemo repente fit turpiſſimus*. But where pride has got the aſcendant in a man he is in the high road to all abominations.

3. How much the ſins of Jeruſalem exceeded thoſe of Sodom and Samaria; were more heinous in the ſight of God, either in themſelves, or by reaſon of ſeveral aggravations. *Thou haſt not only walked after their ways*, and trod in their ſteps, but haſt quite *outdone* them in wickedneſs, *ver.* 47. Thou thoughteſt it *a very little thing* to do as they did; didſt laugh at them as *ſneaking* ſinners, and *ſilly* ones, thou wouldeſt be more *cunning*, more *daring* in wickedneſs; wouldeſt triumph more boldly over thy convictions, and bid more open defiance to God and religion; if a man will *break*, let him break for *ſomething*; thus *thou waſt corrupted more than they in all thy ways*. Jeruſalem was more *polite* and therefore ſinned with more wit, more art, and ingenuity, than Sodom and Samaria could. Jeruſalem had more wealth and power, and its government was more abſolute and arbitrary, and therefore had the more opportunity of oppreſſing the poor, and ſhedding malignant influences around her than Sodom and Samaria had. Jeruſalem had the temple and the ark, and the prieſthood, and kings of the houſe of David, and therefore the wickedneſs of that holy city, that was ſo *dignified*, ſo *near*, ſo *dear* to God, was more provoking to him than the wickedneſs of Sodom and Samaria, that had not Jeruſalem's privileges and means of grace. Sodom has *not done as thou haſt done*, ver. 48. This agrees with what Chriſt ſaith, *Matth.* xi. 24. *It ſhall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee.* The kingdom of the ten tribes had been very wicked, and yet *Samaria has not committed half of thy ſins*, ver. 51. has not worſhipped half ſo many idols, nor ſlain half ſo many prophets. It was bad enough that they of Jeruſalem were guilty of Sodom's ſins, Sodomy itſelf not excepted, 1 *Kings* xiv. 24. 2 *Kings* xxiii. 7. And tho' the *Dead ſea*, the ſtanding monument of Sodom's ſin and ruin *bordered* upon their country, *Numb.* xxxiv. 12. and that ſulphureous lake was always *under their noſe*, God having *taken away Sodom and her daughters* in ſuch way and manner as he *ſaw good*, as he ſaith here, *ver.* 50. ſo as one thing ſhould effectually make their *overthrow* an *enſample to thoſe that after ſhould live ungodly*, 2 Pet. ii. 6. yet they did not take warning, but *multiplied their abominations more than they*; and, (1.) By this they *juſtified Sodom and Samaria*, ver. 51. They pretended in their haughtineſs and ſuperciliouſneſs to *judge them*, and in the days of old when they retained their integrity they did *judge them*, ver. 52. But now they *juſtify them* comparatively, *Sodom and Samaria* are *more righteous than thou*, i. e. leſs wicked; it will look like ſome *extenuation* of their ſins, that as *bad* as they were Jeruſalem was *worſe*, tho' it was God's own city: Not that it will ſerve for a plea to juſtify Sodom, but to condemn Jeruſalem, againſt which Sodom and Samaria will *riſe up in judgment*. (2.) For this they ought themſelves to be greatly aſhamed; thou who haſt *judged thy ſiſters*, and cried out ſhame on them, now *bear thine own ſhame, for thy ſins which thou haſt committed*, which tho' of the ſame kind with theirs, yet being committed *by thee* are *more abominable than theirs*, ver. 52. This may be taken either as foretelling their ruin, *thou ſhalt bear thy ſhame*, or as inviting them to repentance, *be thou confounded, and bear thy ſhame*: take the ſhame to thyſelf that is due to thee; and then it may be hoped ſinners will forſake their ſins, when they begin to be heartily aſhamed of them. And therefore they ſhall go into captivity, and there they ſhall lie that they may be *confounded in all that they have done*; becauſe they had been a comfort and encouragement to Sodom and Samaria, *ver.* 54. Note, There is nothing in ſin which we have more reaſon to be aſhamed of than this, that by our ſin we have encouraged others in ſin, and *comforted* them in that for which they muſt be *grieved*, or they are *undone*. Another reaſon why they muſt *now* be *aſhamed* is, becauſe in the day of their proſperity they had looked with ſo much diſdain upon their neighbours; *thy ſiſter Sodom was not mentioned by thee in the day of thy pride*, ver. 56. they thought Sodom not worthy to be named the ſame day with Jeruſalem, little dreaming that Jeruſalem would at length lie under a worſe and more ſcandalous character than Sodom herſelf. Thoſe that are *high* may perhaps come to ſtand upon a level with thoſe they contemn: Or, Sodom was *not mentioned*, i. e. the warning deſigned to be given to thee by Sodom's ruin was not regarded. If the Jews had but talked more frequently and ſeriouſly to one another, and to their children concerning *the wrath of God revealed from heaven* againſt *Sodom's ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs*, it might have kept them in awe, and prevented their treading in their ſteps; but they kept the thought of it at a diſtance, would not bear the mention of it; and (as the ancients ſay) put Iſaiah to death for putting them in mind of it, when he called them *rulers of Sodom*, and *people of Gomorrah*, Iſa. i. 10. Note, Thoſe are but preparing judgments for themſelves that will not take notice of God's judgments upon others.

4. What deſolations God had brought and was bringing upon Jeruſalem, for theſe wickedneſſes wherein they had exceeded Sodom and Samaria. (1.) She hath already long ago been diſgraced, and fallen into contempt among her neighbours, ver. 57.

Before

Before her wickedneſs was diſcovered; before ſhe came to be ſo groſsly and openly flagitious, yet ſhe bore the juſt puniſhment of her ſecret and more concealed lewdneſs, when ſhe fell under *the reproach of the daughters of Syria, of the Philiſtines*, who were ſaid to *deſpiſe her*, and *be aſhamed of her*, ver. 27, and of *all that were round about her*, which ſeems to refer to the deſcent made upon Judah by the Syrians in the days of Ahaz, and ſoon after another by the Philiſtines, 2. *Chron.* xxviii. 5, 18. Note, Thoſe that diſgrace themſelves by yielding to their luſts will juſtly be brought into *diſgrace* by being made to yield to their enemies: and it is obſervable, that before God brought potent enemies upon them for *their deſtruction* he brought enemies upon them that were leſs formidable *for their reproach*; and if leſſer judgments would do the work God would not ſend greater. In this *thou haſt born thy lewdneſs*, ver. 58. Thoſe that will not caſt off their ſins by repentance and reformation, ſhall be made to bear their ſins to their confuſion. (2.) She is now *in captivity*, or haſtning into captivity, and therein is reckoned with, not only for her *lewdneſs*, ver. 58. but for her perfidiouſneſs and covenant-breaking, *ver.* 59. *I will deal with thee as thou haſt done*, i. e. I will forſake thee as thou haſt forſaken me, and caſt thee off as thou haſt caſt me off, for thou haſt *deſpiſed the oath, in breaking the covenant*, which ſeems to be meant of the covenant God made with their fathers at mount Sinai, whereby he took them and theirs to be a peculiar people to himſelf; they flattered themſelves with a conceit, that becauſe God had hitherto continued his favour to them notwithſtanding their provocations, he would do ſo ſtill: no, ſaith God, you have *broken covenant* with me, have *deſpiſed* both the promiſes of the covenant, and the obligations of it, and therefore I will *deal with thee as thou haſt done*. Note, Thoſe that will not adhere to God as *their God*, have no reaſon to expect that he ſhould continue to own them as *his people*. (3.) The captivity of the wicked Jews and their ruin, ſhall be as *irrevocable* as that of Sodom and Samaria. In this ſenſe, as a threatning, moſt interpreters take, *ver.* 53, 55. *When I ſhall bring again the captivity of Sodom and Samaria, and when they ſhall return to their former eſtate, then I will bring again the captivity of thy captives in the midſt of them*, and as it were for their ſakes, and under their ſhadow and protection, becauſe they are *more righteous than thou*, and *then thou ſhalt return to thy former eſtate*. But Sodom and Samaria were never brought back, nor ever returned to their former eſtate, and therefore let not Jeruſalem expect it, *i. e.* thoſe who now remained there, whom God would *deliver to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth for their hurt*, Jer. xxiv. 9, 10. ſooner ſhall the Sodomites ariſe out of the ſalt ſea, and the Samaritans return out of the land of Aſſyria than they enjoy their peace and proſperity again; for to their ſhame be it ſpoken, it is *a comfort* to thoſe of the ten tribes who are diſperſed and in captivity, to ſee thoſe of the two tribes who had been as bad or worſe than they in like manner diſperſed and in captivity; and therefore they ſhall live and die, ſhall ſtand and fall together; the bad ones of both ſhall periſh together, the good ones of both ſhall return together. Note, Thoſe who do as the worſt of ſinners do, muſt expect to *fare* as they *fare*; *Let mine enemy be as the wicked.*

60. ¶ Nevertheleſs, I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will eſtabliſh unto thee an everlaſting covenant. 61. Then thou ſhalt remember thy ways, and be aſhamed, when thou ſhalt receive thy ſiſters, thine elder and thy younger: and I will give them unto thee for daughters, but not by thy covenant. 62. And I will eſtabliſh my covenant with thee, and thou ſhalt know that I *am* the LORD: 63. That thou mayeſt remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more becauſe of thy ſhame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou haſt done, ſaith the Lord GOD.

Here in the cloſe of the chapter, after a moſt ſhameful conviction of ſin, and a moſt dreadful denunciation of judgments, mercy is remembred, mercy is reſerved for thoſe that ſhall come after, as was when God ſware in his wrath concerning thoſe who came out of Egypt, that they ſhould not enter into Canaan, yet (ſaith God) your little ones ſhall; ſo here. And ſome think that what is ſaid of the return of Sodom and Samaria, (*ver.* 53, 55.) and of Jeruſalem with them is a promiſe, and it may be underſtood ſo, if by Sodom we underſtand (as Grotius, and ſome of the Jewiſh writers do) the Moabites and Ammonites, the poſterity of Lot who once dwelt in Sodom; their captivity was returned, *Jer.* xlviii. 47.—xlix. 6. as was that of many of the ten tribes, and Judah's with them. But theſe cloſing verſes are without doubt a precious promiſe, which was in part fulfilled at the return of the penitent and reformed Jews out of Babylon, but was to have its full accompliſhment in goſpel-times, and in that *repentance and remiſſion of ſins* which ſhould then be *preached* with ſucceſs *to all nations, beginning at Jeruſalem.* Now obſerve here,

1. From whence this mercy ſhould take riſe; from *God himſelf*, and his *remembring his covenant* with them, *ver.* 60. *Nevertheleſs* tho' they had been ſo provoking, and God has been ſo provoking, to that degree that one would think they could never be reconciled again, yet *I will remember my covenant with thee*, that covenant which I made with thee *in the days of thy youth*, and will revive it again. Tho' thou haſt *broken the covenant*, ver. 59. I will *remember* it, and it ſhall flouriſh again. See how much it is our comfort and advantage that God is pleaſed to deal with us in a *covenant way*, for thus the mercies of it come to be *ſure mercies*, and *everlaſting*, Iſa. lv. 3. and while this root ſtands firm in the ground, there is *hope of the tree*, tho' it be *cut down*, that *through the ſcent of water it bud again.* We do not find that they put him in mind of the covenant, but *ex mero motu* he *remembers* it, as he had promiſed, *Lev.* xxvi. 42. *Then will I remember my covenant, and will remember the land.* He that bids us to be ever mindful of the covenant, no doubt, will himſelf be *ever mindful of it*, the word *which he commanded* (and what he commands ſtands faſt for ever) to *a thouſand generations.*

2. How they ſhould be prepared and qualified for this mercy, *ver.* 61. *Thou ſhalt remember thy ways*, thine evil ways, God will put thee in mind of them, will ſet them in order before thee, that thou mayeſt be *aſhamed of them.* Note, God's good work in us commenceth and keepeth pace with his good-will towards us. When he remembers his covenant *for us*, that he may not remember our ſins *againſt us*, he puts us upon remembring our ſins *againſt our ſelves.* And if we will but be brought to *remember our ways*, how crooked and perverſe they have been, and how we have *walked contrary to God* in them, we cannot but be aſhamed; and when we are ſo, we are beſt prepared to receive the honour and comfort of a ſealed pardon, and ſettled peace.

3. What the mercy is that God has in reſerve for them. (1.) He will take them into covenant with himſelf, *ver.* 60. *I will eſtabliſh unto thee an everlaſting covenant*; and again, *ver.* 62. *I will eſtabliſh*, re-eſtabliſh, and eſtabliſh more firmly than ever, *my covenant with thee.* Note, It is an unſpeakable comfort to all true penitents that the covenant of grace is ſo well ordered in all things, that every tranſgreſſion in the covenant doth not throw us out of covenant, for that is inviolable. (2.) He will bring the Gentiles into church-communion with them, *ver.* 61. *Thou ſhalt receive thy ſiſters*, the Gentile nations that are round about thee, *thine elder and thy younger*, greater than thou art, and leſſer, ancient nations and modern, and *I will give them unto thee for daughters*, i. e. they ſhould be founded, nurſed, taught, and educated by that goſpel, that *word of the Lord*, which ſhall *go forth* from Zion, and from Jeruſalem; ſo that all the neighbours ſhall call Jeruſalem mother, while the church continues there, and ſhall acknowledge the Jeruſalem which is from above, and *which is free* to be the *mother of us all*, Gal. iv. 26. They ſhall be *thy daughters*, but *not by thy covenant*, i. e. not by the covenant of peculiarity, not as being proſelytes to the Jewiſh religion, and ſubjects to the yoke of the ceremonial law, but as being converts with thee to the Chriſtian religion. Or, not *by thy covenant*, i. e. not upon ſuch terms as thou ſhalt think fit to impoſe upon them as conquered nations, as captives and homagers, to whom thou mayeſt give law at pleaſure, ſuch a dominion as that the carnal Jews hope to have over the nations; no, they ſhall be thy daughters *by my covenant*, the covenant of grace made with thee and them in conſort; as an *indenture tripartite*: I will be a father, a common father, both to Jews and Gentiles, and ſo they ſhall become ſiſters to one another. And when thou *ſhalt receive them*, thou ſhalt be *aſhamed of thine own evil ways*, wherein thou waſt conformed to them. Thou ſhalt bluſh to look a Gentile in the face, remembring how much worſe than the Gentiles thou waſt in the day of thine apoſtaſy.

4. What the fruit and effect of this will be.

1. God will hereby be glorified, *ver.* 62. *Thou ſhalt know that I am the Lord.* It ſhall hereby *be known* that the God of Iſrael is Jehovah, a God of power, and faithful to his covenant; and thou ſhalt *know it*, who haſt hitherto lived as if thou didſt not know or believe it. It had had often been ſaid in wrath, *Ye ſhall know that I am the Lord*, ſhall know it to your coſt; here it is ſaid in mercy, ye ſhall know it to your comfort; and it is one of the moſt precious promiſes of the new covenant which God has made with us, That *all ſhall know him from the leaſt to the greateſt.*

2. They ſhall hereby be more humbled, and abaſed for ſin, *ver.* 63. *That thou mayeſt be* the more *confounded* at the *remembrance of all that thou haſt done* amiſs, mayeſt reproach thy ſelf for it, and call thy ſelf a thouſand times unwiſe, undutiful, ungrateful, and unlike what thou waſt, and mayeſt never *open thy mouth any more* in contradiction to God, reflection on him, or complaints of him, but mayeſt be for ever ſilent and ſubmiſſive *becauſe of thy ſhame.* Note, Thoſe that rightly *remember* their ſins will be truly *aſhamed* of them; and thoſe that are truly aſhamed of their ſins will ſee great reaſon to be patient under their afflictions; to be dumb and not open their mouths againſt

againſt what God doth. But that which is moſt obſervable is, that all this ſhall be *when I am pacified towards thee, ſaith the Lord God.* Note, It is the gracious ingenuity of true penitents, that the clearer evidences and the fuller inſtances they have of God's being reconciled to them, the more grieved and aſhamed they are that ever they have offended. God is in Jeſus Chriſt *pacified towards us*; he is our peace, and it is by his croſs that we are *reconciled*, and in his goſpel that God is reconciling the world to himſelf; now the conſideration of this ſhould be powerful to melt our hearts into a godly ſorrow for ſin. This is repenting becauſe *the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* The prodigal, after he had received the kiſs, which aſſured him that his father was *pacified towards him*, was aſhamed and confounded, and ſaid, *Father, I have ſinned againſt heaven and before thee.* And the more our ſhame for ſin is increaſed by the ſenſe of pardoning mercy, the more will our comfort in God be increaſed.

CHAP. XVII.

God was, in the foregoing chapter, reckoning with the people of Judah, and bringing ruin upon them for their treachery in breaking covenant with him; in this chapter he is reckoning with the king of Judah for his treachery in breaking covenant with the king of Babylon, for when God came to contend with them he found many grounds of his controverſy. The thing was now in doing, Zedekiah was practiſing with the king of Egypt underhand for aſſiſtance in a treacherous project he had formed to ſhake off the yoke of the king of Babylon, and violate the homage and fealty he had ſworn to him. For this God by the prophet here, (1.) Threatens the ruin of him and his kingdom, by a parable of two eagles and a vine, ver. 1—10. *And the reddition of that parable,* ver. 11—21. *But in the cloſe,* (2.) *He promiſeth hereafter to raiſe the royal family of Judah again, the houſe of David, in the Meſſiah and his kingdom,* ver. 22—24.

1. AND the word of the LORD came unto me, ſaying, 2. Son of man, put forth a riddle, and ſpeak a parable unto the houſe of Iſrael; 3. And ſay, Thus ſaith the Lord GOD, A great eagle with great wings, long-winged, full of feathers, which had divers colours, came unto Lebanon, and took the higheſt branch of the cedar: 4. He cropt off the top of his young twigs, and carried it into a land of traffick; he ſet it in a city of merchants. 5. He took alſo of the ſeed of the land, and planted it in a fruitful field, he placed *it* by great waters, *and* ſet it *as* a willow-tree. 6. And it grew, and became a ſpreading vine of low ſtature, whoſe branches turned toward him, and the roots thereof were under him: ſo it became a vine, and brought forth branches, and ſhot forth ſprigs. 7. There was alſo another great eagle with great wings, and many feathers; and behold, this vine did bend her roots toward him, and ſhot forth her branches toward him, that he might water it by the furrows of her plantation. 8. It was planted in a good ſoil by great waters, that it might bring forth branches, and that it might bear fruit, that it might be a goodly vine. 9. Say thou, Thus ſaith the Lord GOD, Shall it proſper? ſhall he not pull up the roots thereof, and cut off the fruit thereof, that it wither? it ſhall wither in all thy leaves of her ſpring, even without great power, or many people to pluck it up by the roots thereof. 10. Yea behold, *being* planted, ſhall it proſper? ſhall it not utterly wither, when the eaſt-wind toucheth it? it ſhall wither in the furrows where it grew. 11. Moreover, the word of the LORD came unto me, ſaying, 12. Say now to the rebellious houſe, Know ye not what theſe *things mean?* tell *them*, Behold, the king of Babylon is come to Jeruſalem, and hath taken the king thereof, and the princes thereof, and led them with him to Babylon; 13. And hath taken of the kings ſeed, and made a covenant with him, and hath taken an oath of him: he hath alſo taken the mighty of the land: 14. That the kingdom might be baſe, that it might not lift it ſelf up, *but* that by keeping of his covenant it might ſtand. 15. But he rebelled againſt him in ſending his ambaſſadors into Egypt, that they might give him horſes and much people: ſhall he proſper? ſhall he eſcape that doth ſuch *things?* or ſhall he break the covenant, and be delivered? 16. *As* I live, ſaith the Lord GOD, ſurely in the place *where* the king *dwelleth* that made him king, whoſe oath he deſpiſed, and whoſe covenant he brake, *even* with him, in the midſt of Babylon he ſhall die. 17. Neither ſhall Pharaoh with *his* mighty army and great company make for him in the war by caſting up mounts, and building forts to cut off many perſons. 18. Seeing he deſpiſed the oath, by breaking the covenant (when lo, he had given his hand) and hath done all theſe *things*, he ſhall not eſcape. 19. Therefore thus ſaith the Lord GOD, *As* I live, ſurely mine oath that he hath deſpiſed, and my covenant that he hath broken, even it will I recompenſe upon his own head. 20. And I will ſpread my net upon him, and he ſhall be taken in my ſnare, and I will bring him to Babylon, and will plead with him there for his treſpaſs that he hath treſpaſſed againſt me. 21. And all his fugitives with all his bands ſhall fall by the ſword, and they that remain ſhall be ſcattered towards all winds: and ye ſhall know that I the LORD have ſpoken *it.*

We muſt take all theſe verſes together that we may have the parable and the reddition of it at one view before us, becauſe they will illuſtrate one another.

1. The prophet is appointed to *put forth a riddle* to the *houſe of Iſrael*, ver. 2. not to puzzle them, as Sampſon's riddle was put forth to the Philiſtines, not to hide the mind of God from them in obſcurity, or to leave them in uncertainty about it, one advancing one conjecture and another another, as is uſual in expounding riddles; no, he is preſently to tell them the meaning of it; *Let him that ſpeaks in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret*, 1 Cor. xiv. 13. But he muſt deliver this meſſage in a riddle or parable that they might take the more notice of it, might be the more affected with it themſelves, and might the better remember it, and tell it to others. For theſe reaſons God often uſed ſimilitudes by his ſervants the prophets, and Chriſt himſelf *opened his mouth in parables.* Riddles and parables are uſed for an amuſement to our ſelves, and an entertainment to our friends, the prophet muſt make uſe of theſe to ſee if in *this dreſs* the things of God might find acceptance, and *inſinuate* themſelves into the minds of a careleſs people. Note, Miniſters ſhould ſtudy to find out acceptable words, and try various methods to do good; and as far as they have reaſon to think will be for edification, ſhould both bring that which is familiar into their preaching, and their preaching too into their familiar diſcourſe; that there may not be ſo vaſt a diſſimilitude as with ſome there is between which they ſay in the pulpit, and what they ſay out.

2. He is appointed to expound this riddle to *the rebellious houſe*, ver. 12. tho' being *rebellious* they might juſtly have been left in ignorance, to ſee, and hear, and not perceive, yet the thing ſhall be explained to them. *Know ye not what theſe things mean?* they that knew the ſtory, and what was now in agitation, might make a ſhrewd gueſs at the meaning of this riddle, but that they might be left *without excuſe*, he is to give it them in plain terms, ſtripped of the metaphor. But the ænigma was firſt propounded for them to ſtudy on a while, and to ſend to their friends at Jeruſalem, that they might enquire after and expect the ſolution of it ſome time after.

Let us now ſee what the matter of this meſſage is:

1. Nebuchadnezzar had ſome time ago carried off Jehoiachin, the ſame that was called Jeconiah, when he was but eighteen years of age, and had reigned in Jeruſalem but *three months*, him and his princes and great men, and had brought them captives to Babylon, 2 *Kings* xxiv. 12. This in the parable is repreſented by an eagle's cropping the top and tender branch of *a cedar*, and carrying it into *a land of traffick*, a *city of merchants*, ver. 3, 4. which is explained, *ver.* 12. The *king of Babylon* took the *king of Jeruſalem*, who was no more able to reſiſt him than a young twig of a tree is to contend with the ſtrongeſt bird of prey, that eaſily crops it off, perhaps towards the making of *her neſt*. Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel's viſion is *a lion*, the king of beaſts, *Dan.* vii. 4. there he has *eagles wings*, ſo ſwift were his motions, ſo ſpeedy were his conqueſts. Here in this parable he is *an eagle*, the king of birds; a *great eagle*, that lives upon ſpoil and rapine, whoſe young ones *ſuck up blood*, Job xxxix. 30. His dominion extends itſelf far and wide, like the *great* and *long* wings of an eagle; the people are numerous, for it is *full of feathers*; the court ſplendid, for it has *divers colours*, which look like *embroidering*, as the word is. Jeruſalem is Lebanon, a foreſt of houſes, and very pleaſant; the royal family is *the cedar*, Jehoiachin is the *top branch*, the *top of the young twigs*, which he crops off; Babylon is the *land of traffick* and *city of merchants* where it is ſet. And the king of Judah, being of the houſe of David, will think himſelf much degraded and diſgraced to be lodged among tradeſmen, but he muſt make the beſt of it.

2. When he carried him to Babylon he made his uncle Zedekiah king in his room, *ver.* 5, 6. His name was Mattaniah, the *gift of the Lord*, which Nebuchadnezzar changed into Zedekiah, the *juſtice of the Lord*, to mind him to be *juſt* like *the God* he called

called *his*, for fear of his juſtice. This was *one of the ſeed of the land*, a native, not a foreigner, not one of his Babylonian princes; he was *planted in a fruitful field*, for ſo Jeruſalem as yet was; he *placed it by great waters*, where it would be likely to grow, like *a willow-tree*, which grows quick, and grows beſt in moiſt ground, but is never deſigned or expected to be a ſtately tree. He *ſet it with* care and *circumſpection*; ſo ſome read it; he wiſely provided that it might grow, but that it might not grow too big. *He took of the king's ſeed*, ſo it is explained, *ver.* 13. and *made a covenant with him*, that he ſhould have the kingdom, and enjoy the regal power and dignity, provided he held it as his vaſſal, dependent on him, and accountable to him. He *took an oath of him*, made him ſwear allegiance to him, ſwear by his own God, the God of Iſrael, that he would be a faithful tributary to him, 2 *Chron.* xxxvi. 13. He alſo *took away the mighty of the land*, the chief of the men of war, partly as hoſtages for the performance of the covenant, and partly that the land being thereby weakened the king might be the leſs able, and therefore the leſs in temptation to break his league. What he deſigned we are told, *ver.* 14. *That the kingdom might be baſe*, in reſpect both of honour and ſtrength, might neither be a rival with its *powerful* neighbours, nor a terror to its *feeble* ones as it had been, that *it might not lift up itſelf* to vie with the kingdom of Babylon, or to bear down any of the petty ſtates that were in ſubjection to it. But yet he deſigned that *by keeping of this covenant it might ſtand*, and continue a kingdom. Hereby the pride and ambition of that haughty potentate would be gratified, who aimed to be *like the moſt High*, Iſa. xiv. 14. to have all about him ſubject to him. Now ſee here, (1.) How ſad a change ſin made with the royal family of Judah; time was when all the nations about were tributaries to that, now that has not only loſt its dominion over other nations, but is it ſelf become a tributary. *How is the gold become dim!* Nations by ſin ſell their liberty, and princes their dignity, and *profane their crowns by caſting them to the ground.* (2.) How wiſely Zedekiah did for himſelf in accepting theſe terms, tho' they were diſhonourable, when neceſſity brought him to it. A man may live very comfortably, and contentedly, tho' he cannot bear a part, and make a figure as formerly. A kingdom may ſtand firm and ſafe tho' it do not ſtand ſo high as it hath ſometimes done, and ſo may a family.

3. Zedekiah while he continued faithful to the king of Babylon did very well, and if he would but have reformed his kingdom, and returned to God and his duty, he had dōne better, and by that means might ſoon have recovered his former dignity, *ver.* 6. This plant grew, and tho' it was *ſet as a willow-tree*, and little account was made of it, yet it became *a ſpreading vine of low ſtature*, a great bleſſing to his own country, and his fruits *making glad their hearts*; and it is better be a ſpreading vine of low ſtature than a lofty cedar of no uſe. Nebuchadnezzar was pleaſed, for *the branches turned towards him*, and reſted on him as the vine on the wall, and he had his ſhare of the fruits of this vine; *The roots thereof* too were *under him*, and at his diſpoſe. The Jews had reaſon to be pleaſed, for they ſat under their own vine, which *brought forth branches, and ſhot forth ſprigs*, and looked pleaſant and promiſing. See how gradually the judgments of God came upon this provoking people; how God gave them reſpite, and ſo gave them ſpace to repent. He made *their kingdom baſe*, to try if that would humble them, before he made it no kingdom; yet left it *eaſy* for them, to try if that would win upon them to return to him, that the troubles threatned might be prevented.

4. Zedekiah knew not when he was well, but grew impatient of the diſgrace of being a tributary to the king of Babylon, and to get clear of it entred into a private league with the king of Egypt. He had no reaſon to complain that the king of Babylon put any new hardſhips upon him, or improved his advantages againſt him, that he oppreſſed or impoveriſhed his country, for as he had ſaid before, *ver.* 6. to aggravate his treachery he ſhews again, *ver.* 8. what a fair way he was in to be conſiderable; *He was planted in a good ſoil by great waters*, his family was likely enough to be built up, and his exchequer to be filled in a little time, ſo that if he had dealt faithfully, he might have been *a goodly vine*. But there was *another great eagle* that he had an affection for, and put a confidence in, and that was the *king of Egypt*, ver. 7. Thoſe two great potentates the kings of Babylon and Egypt were but two great eagles, *birds of prey*. This great eagle of Egypt is ſaid to have *great wings*, but not to be *long winged* as the king of Babylon, becauſe tho' the kingdom of Egypt was ſtrong, yet it was not of ſuch a vaſt extent as that of Babylon was. The great eagle is ſaid to have *many feathers*, much wealth, and many ſoldiers, which he depended upon as a ſubſtantial defence, but really were no more than as *many feathers*. Zedekiah promiſing himſelf liberty made himſelf a vaſſal to the king of Egypt, fooliſhly expecting eaſe by changing his maſter. Now, *this vine* did ſecretly and under-hand *bend her roots towards* the king of Egypt, that great eagle, and after a while did openly *ſhoot forth her branches towards him*, give him an intimation how much ſhe coveted an alliance with him, *that he might water it by the furrows of her plantation*, whereas it was *planted by great waters* and did not need any aſſiſtance from him. This is expounded, *ver.* 15. Zedekiah rebelled againſt the king of Babylon in *ſending his ambaſſadors into Egypt*; that they might *give him horſes and much people*, to enable him to contend with the king of Babylon. See what a change ſin had made with the people of God! God promiſed they ſhould be a numerous people, as the ſand of the ſea, yet now if their king had occaſion for *much people* he muſt ſend to Egypt for them, they being for ſin *miniſhed and brought low*, Pſal. cvii. 39. See alſo the folly of fretful diſcontented ſpirits, that *ruin themſelves* by ſtriving to *mend themſelves*, whereas they might be eaſy, and happy enough if they would but *make the beſt of that which is.*

5. God here threatens Zedekiah with the utter deſtruction of him and his kingdom, and his diſpleaſure againſt him paſſeth that doom upon him, for his treacherous revolt from the king of Babylon. This is repreſented in the parable, *ver.* 9, 19. by the *plucking up of this vine by the roots*, *the cutting off the fruit*, and *the withering of the leaves*, the leaves *of her ſpring*, when they are in their greenneſs, *Job* viii. 12. before they begin in autumn to wither of themſelves; the project ſhall be blaſted, it ſhall *utterly wither*, the affairs of this perfidious prince ſhall be ruined paſt retrieve; as a vine when the *eaſt-wind* blaſts it, ſo that it ſhall be fit for nothing but the fire, as we had it in that parable, *chap.* xv. 4. it ſhall wither even *in the furrows where it grew*, tho' they were never ſo well watered. It ſhall be deſtroyed *without great power or many people to pluck it up*, for what need is there of raiſing the militia to pluck up a vine? Note, God can bring great things to paſs without ado; he needs not *great power* and *many people* to effect his purpoſes, a handful will ſerve if he pleaſeth. He can without any difficulty ruin a ſinful king and kingdom, and make no more of it than we do of rooting up a tree that cumbers the ground.

In the reddition of the parable the *ſentence* is very largely recorded; *ſhall he proſper?* ver. 15. can he expect to do ill and fare well? nay, ſhall he that doth ſuch wicked things *eſcape?* ſhall he *break the covenant and be delivered* from that vengeance which is the juſt puniſhment of his treachery? No, can he expect to do ill and not ſuffer ill? Let him hear his doom:

1. It is ratified by the oath of God, *ver.* 16. *As I live, ſaith the Lord God, he ſhall die* for it. This intimates how highly God reſented the crime, and how ſure and ſevere the puniſhment of it would be. God *ſwears in his wrath*, as he did, *Pſal.* xcv. 11. Note, As God's promiſes are confirmed with an oath for comfort to the ſaints, ſo are his threatnings for terror to the wicked. As ſure as God lives and is happy, I may add, and as long, ſo ſure, ſo long, ſhall impenitent ſinners die, and be miſerable.

2. It is juſtified by the heinouſneſs of the crime he had been guilty of. (1.) He had been very *ungrateful* to his benefactor; who had *made him king* and undertook to protect him; had made him *a prince*, when he might as eaſily have made him *a priſoner*. Note, It is a ſin againſt God to be unkind to our friends, and to lift up the heel againſt thoſe that have helped to raiſe us. (2.) He had been very *falſe* to him whom he had covenanted with; this is moſtly inſiſted on. He *deſpiſed the oath*, when his conſcience or friends minded him of it he made a jeſt of it, put on a daring reſolution, and *broke it*, ver. 15, 16, 18, 19. He broke through it, and took a pride in making nothing of it, as a great tyrant in our own day, whoſe maxim (they ſay) it is, *That princes ought not to be ſlaves to their word, any further than is for their intereſt.* That which aggravates Zedekiah's perfidiouſneſs was, that the oath by which he had bound himſelf to the king of Babylon, was, (1.) A *ſolemn* oath; an emphaſis is laid upon this, *ver.* 18. *When, lo, he had given his hand*, as a confederate with the king of Babylon, not only as his *ſubject* but as his *friend*; the joining of hands being a token of the joining of *hearts*. (2.) A *ſacred* oath. God ſaith, *ver.* 19. it is *mine oath* that he has deſpiſed, and *my covenant that he hath broken*. In *every ſolemn oath* God is appealed to as a witneſs of the ſincerity of him that ſwears, and invocated as a judge and revenger of his treachery if he now ſwear falſely, or at any time hereafter break his oath. But the oath of allegiance to a prince is particularly called *the oath of God*, Eccl. viii. 2. as if that had ſomething in it more ſacred than another oath; for princes are *miniſters of God to us for good*, Rom. xiii. 4. Now Zedekiah's breaking this oath and covenant is the ſin which God will *recompenſe upon his own head*, ver. 19. the *treſpaſs which he hath treſpaſſed againſt God*, for which God will *plead with him*, ver. 20. Note, Perjury is a heinous ſin, and highly provoking to the God of heaven. It would not ſerve for an excuſe, (1.) That he who took this oath was *a king*, a king of the houſe of David, whoſe liberty and dignity might ſure ſet him above the obligation of oaths; no, tho' kings are gods to us they are men to God, and not exempt from his law and judgment. The prince is doubtleſs as firmly bound before God to the people by his coronation oath, as the people to the prince by the oath of allegiance. (2.) Nor that this oath was ſworn to the king of Babylon, a heathen prince, worſe than a heretick, with whom the church of Rome ſaith, *No faith is to be kept*; no, tho' Nebuchadnezzar was a worſhipper of falſe gods, yet the true God will avenge his quarrel when one of his

his worſhippers breaks his league with him; for truth is a debt owing to *all men*; and if the profeſſors of the true religion deal perfidiouſly with thoſe of a falſe religion, their profeſſion will be ſo far from excuſing, much leſs juſtifying them, that it aggravates their ſin, and God will the more ſurely and ſeverely puniſh it, becauſe by it they give occaſion to the enemies of the Lord to blaſpheme, as that Mahometan prince, who when the Chriſtians broke their league with him, cried out, *O Jeſus, are theſe thy Chriſtians?* (3.) Nor would it juſtify him, that the oath was extorted from him by a conqueror, for the covenant was *made upon a valuable conſideration.* He held his life and crown upon this condition, that he ſhould be faithful and bear true allegiance to the king of Babylon, and if he enjoy the benefit of his bargain, it is very unjuſt if we do not obſerve the terms. Let him know then, that having *deſpiſed the oath* and *broken the covenant*, he *ſhall not eſcape.* And if the contempt and violation of ſuch an oath, ſuch a covenant as this would be ſo puniſhed, of how much ſorer puniſhment ſhall they be thought worthy who break covenant with God, when *lo they had given their hand* upon it, that they would be faithful; who *tread under foot the blood* of that *covenant* as an unholy thing? Betwixt the covenants there is no compariſon.

3. It is particularized in divers inſtances, wherein the *puniſhment* is made to *anſwer the ſin.* (1.) He had *rebelled* againſt the king of Babylon, and the king of Babylon ſhould be his *effectual conqueror*; in the place where that king *dwells* whoſe *covenant he broke*, even *with him in the midſt of Babylon he ſhall die*, ver. 16. He thinks to get *out of his hands*, but he ſhall fall more than before *into his hands*; God himſelf will now take part with the king of Babylon againſt him; *I will ſpread my net upon him*, ver. 20. God has a net for thoſe that deal perfidiouſly and think to eſcape his righteous judgments, in which they ſhall be taken and held, that would not be held by the bond of an oath and covenant. Zedekiah dreaded Babylon, thither I will bring him, ſaith God, and *plead with him there.* Men will juſtly be *forced upon* that calamity which they endeavour by ſin to *flee from.* (2.) He had *relied upon the king of Egypt*, and the king of Egypt ſhould be his ineffectual helper. *Pharaoh with his mighty army ſhall not make for him in the war*, ver. 17. ſhall do him no ſervice, nor give any check to the progreſs of the Chaldean forces; he ſhall not aſſiſt him in the *ſiege*, by *caſting up mounts and building forts*, nor in battle by *cutting off many perſons.* Note, Every creature is that to us that God makes it to be; and he commonly weakens and withers that *arm of fleſh* which we truſt in, and ſtay our ſelves upon. Now was again fulfilled what was ſpoken on a former like occaſion, *Iſa.* xxx. 7. *The Egyptians ſhall help in vain.* They did ſo, for though upon the approach of the Egyptian army the Chaldeans withdrew from the ſiege of Jeruſalem, upon their retreat they returned to it again and took it. It ſhould ſeem the Egyptians were not hearty, had ſtrength enough but no good-will to help Zedekiah. Note, Thoſe who deal treacherouſly with thoſe that put a confidence in them, will juſtly be dealt treacherouſly with by thoſe they put a confidence in. Yet, the Egyptians were not the only ſtates Zedekiah ſtayed himſelf upon; he had *bands* of his own to ſtand by him; but thoſe *bands*, though we may ſuppoſe they were veteran troops, and the beſt ſoldiers his kingdom afforded, yet they ſhall become *fugitives*, ſhall quit their poſts and make the beſt of their way, and ſhall *fall by the ſword* of the enemy; and the *remains of them ſhall be ſcattered*, ver. 21. This was fulfilled when *the city was broken up, and all the men of war fled*, Jer. lii. 7. Then *ye ſhall know that I the Lord have ſpoken it.* Note, Sooner or later God's word will prove it ſelf; and thoſe who will not believe ſhall find by experience the reality and weight of it.

22. ¶ Thus ſaith the Lord GOD, I will alſo take of the higheſt branch of the high cedar, and will ſet *it*, I will crop off from the top of his young twigs a tender one, and will plant *it* upon an high mountain and eminent. 23. In the mountain of the height of Iſrael will I plant it: and it ſhall bring forth boughs, and bear fruit, and be a goodly cedar: and under it ſhall dwell all fowl of every wing, in the ſhadow of the branches thereof ſhall they dwell. 24. And all the trees of the field ſhall know that I the LORD have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flouriſh: I the LORD have ſpoken, and have done *it*.

When the royal family of Judah was brought to deſolation by the captivity of Jehoiachim and Zedekiah, it might be asked, what is now become of the covenant of royalty made with David, that *his children ſhould ſit upon his throne for evermore?* Do the *ſure mercies* of David prove thus *unſure!* To which it is ſufficient for the ſilencing of the objectors to anſwer, that the promiſe was conditional, if *they will keep my covenant* then they ſhall continue, *Pſal.* cxxxii. 12. But David's poſterity broke the condition, and ſo forfeited the promiſe. But the unbelief of man ſhall not invalidate the promiſe of God. He will find out another *ſeed of David*, in which it ſhall be accompliſhed; and that is promiſed in theſe verſes.

1. The houſe of David ſhall again be *magnified*, and out of its aſhes another phœnix ſhall ariſe. The metaphor of a tree which was made uſe of in the threatning is here preſented in the promiſe, *ver.* 22, 23. This promiſe had its accompliſhment in part when Zerubbabel, a branch of the houſe of David, was raiſed up to *head* the Jews in their return out of captivity, and to rebuild the city and temple, and re-eſtabliſh their church and ſtate; but it was to have its full accompliſhment in the kingdom of the Meſſiah, who was a root out of a dry ground, and to whom God, according to promiſe, gave *the throne of his father David*, Luke i. 32.

1. God himſelf undertakes the reviving and reſtoring of the houſe of David. Nebuchadnezzar was the *great eagle* that had attempted the re-eſtabliſhing of the houſe of David, in a dependence upon him, *ver.* 5. But the attempt miſcarried; his plantation withered, and was plucked up, Well, ſaith God, the next ſhall be of my planting, *I will alſo take of the higheſt branch of the high cedar, and I will ſet it.* Note, As men have *their* deſigns, God alſo hath *his* deſigns; but *his* will proſper when *theirs* are blaſted. Nebuchadnezzar prided himſelf in ſetting up kingdoms at his pleaſure, *Dan.* v. 19. But thoſe kingdoms ſoon had an end, whereas the *God of heaven ſets up a kingdom that ſhall never be deſtroyed*, Dan. ii. 44.

2. The houſe of David is revived in a *tender one cropped from the top of his young twigs*; Zerubbabel was ſo, what was in him that was hopeful was but the *day of ſmall things*, Zech. iv. 10. yet before him *great mountains* were *made plain.* Our Lord Jeſus was *the higheſt branch of the high cedar*, the *furtheſt* of all from *the root*, for ſoon after he appeared the *houſe of David* was all cut off and extinguiſhed, but the neareſt of all to heaven, for his kingdom was not of this world. He was *taken from the top of the young twigs*, for he is *the man, the branch, a tender* plant, and a *root out of a dry ground*, Iſa. liii. 2. But a *branch of righteouſneſs, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified.*

3. This branch is planted *in a high mountain*, ver. 22. In the *mountain of the height of Iſrael*, ver. 23. thither he brought Zerubbabel in triumph, there he raiſed up his ſon Jeſus, ſent him to gather the *loſt ſheep of the houſe of Iſrael* that were *ſcattered upon the mountains*; ſet him *his king* upon *his holy hill of Zion*, ſent forth the goſpel from *mount Zion*, the word of the Lord from Jeruſalem, there in the *height of Iſrael*, a nation which all its neighbours had an eye upon as *conſpicuous* and *illuſtrious*, was the Chriſtian church firſt planted; the churches of Judea were the moſt primitive churches. The unbelieving Jews did what they could to prevent its being planted there, but who can pluck up what God will plant?

4. From thence it ſpreads far and wide. The Jewiſh ſtate, though it began very low in Zerubbabel's time, was ſet as a tender branch which might eaſily be plucked up, yet took root, ſpread ſtrangely, and after ſome time became very conſiderable; thoſe of other nations, *fowl of every wing*, put themſelves under the protection of it. The Chriſtian church was at firſt like a grain of muſtard-ſeed, but became like this tender branch here, a great tree; its beginning ſmall, but its latter end increaſing to admiration. When the Gentiles flocked into the church, then did the *fowl of every wing* (even the birds of prey, which thoſe preyed upon, as the *wolf and the lamb* feeding together, *Iſa.* xi. 6.) come and *dwell under the ſhadow of this goodly cedar.* See *Dan.* iv. 21.

2. God himſelf will herein be *glorified*, ver. 24. The ſetting up of the Meſſiah's kingdom in the world, ſhall diſcover more clearly than ever to the children of men that *God is the King of all the earth*, Pſal. xlvii. 7. Never was there a more full conviction given of this truth, that all things are governed by an infinitely wiſe and mighty providence than that which was given by the exaltation of Chriſt, and the eſtabliſhment of his kingdom among men; for by that it appeared that God has all hearts in his hand, and the ſovereign diſpoſal of all affairs. *All the trees of the field ſhall know*, (1.) That the tree which God will have to be *brought down* and *dried up* ſhall be ſo, though it be never ſo *high* and ſtately, never ſo *green* and flouriſhing. Neither honour nor wealth, neither external advancements nor internal endowments will ſecure men from humbling withering providences. (2.) That the trees which God will have to be *exalted*, and to *flouriſh* ſhall ſo be, ſhall ſo do, though never ſo *low*, and never ſo *dry.* The houſe of Nebuchadnezzar, that now makes ſo great a figure, ſhall be extirpated; and the houſe of David, that now makes ſo mean a figure, ſhall become famous again; and the Jewiſh nation, that is now deſpicable, ſhall be conſiderable. The kingdom of Satan, that has born ſo long, ſo large, a ſway, ſhall be broken, and the kingdom of Chriſt, that was looked upon with contempt, ſhall be eſtabliſhed. The Jews that in reſpect of church-privileges had been *high* and *green* ſhall be thrown out, and the Gentiles that had been low and dry trees ſhall be taken in their

their room, *Isa.* liv. 1. All the enemies of Christ shall be abased, and made his foot-stool, and his interests shall be confirmed and advanced. *I the Lord have spoken*, it is the decree, the *declared* decree, that Christ must be exalted, must be the head-stone of the corner; and *I have done it*, i. e. I will do it, in due time, but it is as sure to be done as if it were done already. With men *saying and doing are two things*, but they are not so with God. What he *hath spoken* we may be sure he *will do*, nor shall one iota or tittle of his word fall to the ground, for *he is not a man that he should lie, or the son of man that he should repent*, either of his threatnings or of his promises.

CHAP. XVIII.

Perhaps in the reading of some of the chapters foregoing, we may have been tempted to think our selves not much concerned in them, (though they also were written for our learning) but this chapter at first view appears highly and nearly to concern us all very highly, very nearly; for without particular reference to Judah and Jerusalem, it lays down the rule of judgment according to which God will deal with the children of men in determining them to their everlasting state; and it agrees with that very ancient rule laid down, Gen. iv. 7. If thou dost well shalt thou not be accepted? *but*, if not, sin, *the punishment of sin*, lies at the door. *Here is*, (1.) *The corrupt proverb used by the profane Jews, which gave occasion to this message here sent them, and made it necessary for the justifying of God in his dealings with them*, ver. 1—3. (2.) *The reply given to this proverb, in which God asserts in general his own sovereignty and justice*, ver. 4. *Wo to the wicked it shall be ill with them*, ver. 4, 20. *But say to the righteous, it shall be well with them*, ver. 5—9. *In particular, as to the case complained of, he assures us*, (1.) *That it shall be ill with a wicked man though he had a good father*, ver. 10—13. (2.) *That it shall be well with a good man though he had a wicked father*, ver. 14—18. *And therefore in this God is righteous*, ver. 19, 20. (3.) *That it shall be well with penitents, though they began never so ill*, ver. 21—23. *and again*, ver. 27, 28. (4.) *That it shall be ill with apostates, though they began never so well*, ver. 24, 26. *And the use of all this is*, (1.) *To justify God, and clear the equity of all his proceedings*, ver. 25, 29. (2.) *To engage and encourage us to repent of our sins and turn to God*, ver. 30—32. *And these are things which* belong to our *everlasting* peace, *O that we may understand and regard them before they be* hid from our eyes!

1. THE word of the LORD came unto me again, saying, 2. What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sowre grapes, and the childrens teeth are set on edge? 3. *As* I live, saith the Lord GOD, ye shall not have *occasion* any more to use this proverb in Israel. 4. Behold, all souls are mine, as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die. 5. ¶ But if a man be just, and do that which is lawful and right, 6. *And* hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lift up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, neither hath defiled his neighbour's wife, neither hath come near to a menstruous woman, 7. And hath not oppressed any, *but* hath restored to the debtor his pledge, hath spoiled none by violence, hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment, 8. He *that* hath not given forth upon upon usury, neither hath taken any increase, *that* hath withdrawn his hand from iniquity, hath executed true judgment between man and man, 9. Hath walked in my statutes, and hath kept my judgments to deal truly; he *is* just, he shall surely live, saith the Lord GOD.

Evil manners, we say, beget good laws; and in like manner sometimes unjust reflections occasion just vindications; evil proverbs beget good prophecies. Here is,

1. An *evil proverb* commonly used by the Jews in their captivity. We had one before, *chap.* xii. 22. and a reply to it, here we have another; that sets God's justice at defiance, *The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth.* The threatnings are *a jest.* This chargeth him with injustice, as if the judgments executed were *a wrong*; you use this proverb *concerning the land of Israel*, now it is laid waste by the judgments of God, saying, *The fathers have eaten sowre grapes, and the childrens teeth are set on edge*, i. e. we are punished for the sins of our ancestors, which is as great an absurdity in the divine *regimen*, as if the children should have their teeth *set on edge*, or stupified by the fathers *eating sowre grapes*, whereas in the order of natural causes, if men eat or drink any thing amiss, they only themselves shall suffer by it. Now (1.) It must be owned that there was some occasion given for this proverb. God had often said that he would *visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children*, especially the sin of idolatry, intending thereby to express the evil of sin, of that sin, his detestation of it, and just indignation against it, and the heavy punishments he would bring upon idolaters, and that parents might be restrained from sin by their affection to their children, and that children might not be drawn to sin by their reverence for their parents. He had likewise often declared by his prophets, that in bringing the present ruin upon Judah and Jerusalem he had an eye to the sins of Manasseh, and other preceding kings; for looking upon the nation as a body politick, and punishing them with national judgments for national sins, and admitting the maxim in our law, that *a corporation never dies*, reckoning with them now for the iniquities of former ages, was but like making a man *when he is old*, to *possess the iniquities of his youth*, Job xiii. 26. And there is no unrighteousness with God in doing so. But, (2.) They intended it as a reflection upon God, and an impeachment of his equity, in his proceedings against them. Thus far that is right which is implied in this proverbial saying, That they who are guilty of wilful sin *eat sowre grapes*, they do that which they will feel from sooner or later. The grapes may look well enough in the temptation, but they will be bitter, as bitterness itself, in the reflection. They will set the sinner's *teeth on edge*; when conscience is awake, and sets the sin in order before them, it will spoil the relish of their comforts, as when the teeth are *set on edge.* But they suggest it as unreasonable, that the children should smart for the fathers folly, and feel the pain of that which they never tasted the pleasure of, and that God was unrighteous in thus taking vengeance, and could not justify it. See how *wicked* the reflection is, how daring the impudence; yet see how *witty* it is, and how *sly* the comparison. Many that are *impious* in their *jeers* are ingenious in their jests; and thus the malice of hell against God and religion is insinuated and propagated. It is here put into a proverb, and that proverb *used*, commonly used, they had it up ever and anon. And though it had plainly a blasphemous meaning, yet they sheltered themselves under the similitude from the imputation of downright blasphemy. Now by this it appears they were *unhumbled* under the rod, for instead of condemning themselves and justifying God, they condemned him and justified themselves; but *wo to him that* thus *strives with his Maker.*

2. A just reproof of, and reply to this proverb, *What mean ye* to use it? That is the *reproof*; do you intend hereby to try it out with God? Or can you think any other but that you will hereby provoke him to be *angry with you till he has consumed you?* Is this the way to reconcile your selves to him, and make your peace with him? The *reply* follows, in which God tells them,

1. That the use of the proverb should be taken away. This is said, it is sworn, *ver.* 3. *Ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb*; or, as it may be read, *ye shall not have the use of this parable.* The taking away of this parable is made the matter of a promise, *Jer.* xxxi. 29. Here it is made the matter of a threatning; there it intimates that God will return to them in ways of mercy, here it intimates, that God would proceed against them in ways of judgment. He will so punish them for this impudent saying, that they shall not dare to use it any more; as in another case, *Jer.* xxiii. 34, 36. God will find out effectual ways to silence those cavillers. Or, God will so manifest both to themselves and others, that they have wickedness of their own enough to bring all these desolating judgments upon them, that they shall no longer for shame lay it upon the sins of their fathers that they were thus dealt with. Your own consciences shall tell you, and all your neighbours shall confirm it, that you your selves have eaten the same *sowre grapes* that your fathers eat before you, or else *your teeth* had not been *set on edge.*

1. That really the saying itself was *unjust*, and a causeless reflection upon God's government. For, (1.) God doth not punish the children for the fathers sins, unless they tread in their steps, and *fill up the measure of their iniquity*, Matth. xxiii. 32. and then they have no reason to complain, for whatever they suffer it is less than *their own sin* has deserved, And when God speaks of *visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children*, that is so far from putting any hardship upon children, to whom he only renders *according to their works*, that it accounts for God's patience with the parents, whom he therefore does not punish presently because he *lays up their iniquity for their children*, Job xxi. 19. (2.) It is only in temporal calamities that children (and sometimes innocent ones) fare the worse for their parents wickedness, and God can alter the property of those calamities, and make them work for good to those that are visited with them; but as to spiritual and eternal misery, (and that is the death here spoken of) the children shall by no means smart for the parents sins. This

This is here ſhewed at large; and it is a wonderful piece of condeſcenſion that the Great God is pleaſed to *reaſon the caſe* with ſuch *wicked and unreaſonable men*, that he did not immediately ſtrike them dumb or dead, but vouchſafed to ſtate the matter before them, that he may be *clear when he is judged*. Now in his reply,

1. He aſſerts and maintains his own abſolute and inconteſtable ſovereignty; *behold, all ſouls are mine*, ver. 4. God here claims a property in all the ſouls of the children of men, one as well as another; (1.) *Souls are his*. He that is the Maker of *all things* is in a particular manner the *Father of ſpirits*, for his image is ſtamped on the ſouls of men; it was ſo in their creation, it is ſo in their renovation. He *formeth the ſpirit of man within him*, and is therefore called *the God of the ſpirits of all fleſh*, of embodied ſpirits. (2.) *All ſouls are his*, all created by him, and for him, and accountable to him. *As the ſoul of the father, ſo the ſoul of the ſon, is mine*. Our earthly parents are only the *fathers of our fleſh*, our ſouls are not theirs, God challengeth them. Now from hence it follows, for the clearing of this matter, (1.) That it is certain God may do *what he pleaſeth* both with fathers and children, and none may ſay unto him *what doſt thou?* He that gave us our being doth us no wrong if he take it away again, much leſs when he only takes away ſome of the ſupports and comforts of it; it is as abſurd to quarrel with him, as for *the thing formed to ſay to him that formed it, why haſt thou made me thus?* (2.) That it is as certain God *bears a good will* both to father and ſon, and will put no hardſhip upon either; we are ſure God hateth nothing that he has made, and therefore (ſpeaking of the adult who are capable of acting for themſelves) he has ſuch a kindneſs for *all ſouls*, that none die but through their own default. *All ſouls are his*, and therefore he is not partial in his judgment of them. Let us ſubſcribe to his intereſt in us and dominion over us; he ſaith *all ſouls are mine*; let us anſwer, Lord, my ſoul is thine, I devote it to thee to be employed for thee, and made happy in thee. It is with good reaſon that God ſaith, *My ſon, give me thy heart*, for it is my own, to which we muſt yield, *Father, take my heart*, it is thy own.

2. Though God might juſtify himſelf by inſiſting upon his ſovereignty, yet he waves that, and lays down the equitable and unexceptionable rule of judgment, by which he will proceed as to particular perſons; and it is this.

1. The ſinner that perſiſts in ſin *ſhall certainly die*, his iniquity ſhall be his ruin. *The ſoul that ſinneth it ſhall die*, ſhall die as a ſoul can die, ſhall be excluded from the favour of God, which is the life and bliſs of the ſoul, and ſhall lie for ever under his wrath, which is its death and miſery. Sin is the act of the *ſoul*, the body is but the *inſtrument of unrighteouſneſs*, it is called the *ſin of the ſoul*, Mich. vi. 7. and therefore the puniſhment of ſin is the *tribulation and anguiſh of the ſoul*, Rom. ii. 9.

2. The *righteous man* that perſeveres in his righteouſneſs ſhall certainly live. *If a man be juſt*, have a good principle, a good ſpirit and diſpoſition, and as an evidence of that *do judgment and juſtice*, ver. 5. *he ſhall ſurely live, ſaith the Lord God*, ver. 9. He that makes conſcience of conforming himſelf in every thing to the will of God, that makes it his buſineſs to ſerve God, and his aim to glorify God, he ſhall without fail be happy here and for ever in the love and favour of God; and wherein he comes ſhort of his duty, it ſhall be forgiven him, through a mediator.

Now here is part of the character of this juſt man.

1. He is careful to keep himſelf clean from the pollutions of ſin, and at a diſtance from all the appearances of evil. (1.) From ſins againſt the *ſecond commandment*. In the matters of God's worſhip he is jealous, for he knows God is ſo. He hath not only not *ſacrificed* in the high places to the images there ſet up, but he has not ſo much as *eaten upon the mountains*, i. e. not had any communion with idolaters by *eating things ſacrificed to idols*, 1 Cor. x. 20. He would not only not kneel with them at their altars, but not ſit with them at their tables in their high places. He deteſts not only the idols of the heathen, but *the idols of the houſe of Iſrael*, which were not only allowed of, but generally applauded and adored by thoſe that were accounted the profeſſing people of God. He has not only not worſhipped thoſe idols, but he hath not ſo much as *lift up his eyes* to them, he has not given them a favourable look; has had no regard at all to them, neither deſired their favour, nor dreaded their frowns. He has obſerved ſo many bewitched by them, that he has not dared ſo much as to look at them, leſt he ſhould be taken in the ſnare. The *eyes* of idolaters are ſaid to *go a whoring*, Ezek. vi. 9. See *Deut.* iv. 19.

(2.) From ſins againſt the *ſeventh commandment*. He is careful to poſſeſs his veſſel in *ſanctification and honour*, and not *in the luſts of uncleanneſs*; and therefore he has not dared to *defile his neighbour's wife*, nor ſaid or done any thing which had the leaſt tendency to corrupt or debauch her, no nor will he make any undue approaches to his own wife when ſhe is *put apart for her uncleanneſs*, for it was forbidden by the law, *Lev.* xviii. 19.—xx. 18. Note, It is an eſſential branch of wiſdom and juſtice to keep the appetites of the body always in ſubjection to reaſon and virtue.

(3.) From ſins againſt the *eighth commandment*. He is a *juſt man* that hath not by fraud and under colour of law and right *oppreſſed any*, and that hath not with force and arms *ſpoiled any by violence*; not ſpoiled them of their goods or eſtates, much leſs of their liberties and lives, *ver.* 7. Oppreſſion and violence were the ſins of the old world that brought the deluge, and are ſins of which ſtill God is and will be the avenger. Nay, he is one that has not lent his money *upon uſury*, nor *taken increaſe*, ver. 8. though being done by contract it may ſeem free from injuſtice, *Volenti non fit injuria*, yet as far as it is forbidden by the law he dares not do it. A moderate uſury they were allowed to receive from ſtrangers, but not from their brethren. A juſt man will not take advantage of his neighbour's neceſſity to make a prey of him, nor indulge himſelf in eaſe and idleneſs, to live upon the ſweat and toil of others; and therefore will not *take increaſe* from thoſe who cannot *make increaſe* of what he lends them; nor be rigorous in exacting what was agreed for from thoſe that by the act of God are diſabled to pay it; but is willing to ſhare in loſs as well as profit; *Qui ſentit commodum, ſentire debet & onus*.

2. He makes conſcience of doing the duties of his place. He hath *reſtored the pledge* to the poor debtor, according to the the law, *Exod.* xxii. 26. *If thou take thy neighbour's raiment* for a pawn, the raiment that is for neceſſary uſe, thou ſhalt *deliver it* to him again, that he may ſleep in his own bed-clothes. Nay, he has not only reſtored to the poor that which was their own, but has *given his bread to the hungry*; Obſerve, it is called *his bread* becauſe it is honeſtly come by; that which is given to ſome is not unjuſtly taken from others; for God hath ſaid, *I hate robbery for burnt-offerings*. Worldly men inſiſt upon it, that their bread is *their own*, as Nabal, who therefore would not give of it to David, 1 *Sam.* xxv. 17. yet let them know it is not ſo their own, but that they are bound to do good to others with it. Clothes are neceſſary as well as food, and therefore this *juſt man* is ſo charitable as to *cover the naked* alſo *with a garment*, ver. 7. The coats which Dorcas had made for the poor were produced as witneſſes of her charity, *Acts* ix. 39. This juſt man has *withdrawn his hand from iniquity*, ver. 8. if at any time he has been drawn in through inadvertency, to that which afterwards has appeared to him to be an ill thing, he doth not perſiſt in it, becauſe he has begun it, but *withdraws his hand* from that which he now perceives to be *iniquity*; for he *executes true judgment between man and man*, according as his opportunity is of doing it; as a judge, as a witneſs, as a juryman, as a referee, and in all commerce is concerned that juſtice be done, that no man be wronged, that he that is wronged be righted, and that every man have his own, and is ready to interpoſe himſelf and do any good office in order hereunto. This is his character towards his neighbour, yet it will not ſuffice that he be juſt and true to his *brother*, to compleat his character, he muſt be ſo to *his God* likewiſe, *ver.* 9. *He hath walked in my ſtatutes*, thoſe which relate to the duties of his immediate worſhip, *he hath kept* thoſe and all other *his judgments*, has had reſpect to them all, has made it his conſtant care and endeavour to *conform* and *come up* to them all, to deal truly, i. e. that ſo he may approve himſelf faithful to his covenant with God, that having joined himſelf to God doth not treacherouſly *depart from him*, or *diſſemble with him*, this is a juſt man, and *living he ſhall live*; he ſhall certainly live, ſhall have life, and ſhall have it more abundantly; ſhall live truly, live comfortably, live eternally. *Keep the commandments*, and thou ſhalt *enter into life*, Matth. xix. 17.

10. ¶ If he beget a ſon *that is* a robber, a ſhedder of blood, and *that* doth the like to *any* one of theſe *things*, 11. And that doth not any of thoſe *duties*, but even hath eaten upon the mountains, and defiled his neighbours wife, 12. Hath oppreſſed the poor and needy, hath ſpoiled by violence, hath not reſtored the pledge, and hath lift up his eyes to the idols, hath committed abomination, 13. Hath given forth upon uſury, and hath taken increaſe: ſhall he then live? he ſhall not live: he hath done all theſe abominations, he ſhall ſurely die, his blood ſhall be upon him. 14. ¶ Now lo, *if* he beget a ſon that ſeeth all his fathers ſins which he hath done, and conſidereth, and doth not ſuch like, 15. *That* hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lift up his eyes to the idols of the houſe of Iſrael, hath not defiled his neighbours wife, 16. Neither hath oppreſſed any, hath not withholden the pledge, neither hath ſpoiled by violence, *but* hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment, 17. *That* hath taken off his hand from the poor, *that* hath not received uſury nor increaſe, hath executed my judgments, hath walked in my ſtatutes; he ſhall not die for the iniquity of his father, he ſhall

surely live. 18. *As for* his father, because he cruelly oppressed, spoiled his brother by violence, and did *that* which *is* not good among his people, lo, even he shall die in his iniquity. 19. ¶ Yet say ye, Why? doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father? when the son hath done that which is lawful and right, *and* hath kept all my statutes, and hath done them, he shall surely live. 20. The soul that sinneth, it shall die: the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.

God by the prophet having laid down the general rule of judgment, that he will render eternal life to them that *patiently continue in well-doing*, but indignation and wrath to them that do not *obey the truth* but *obey unrighteousness* (Rom. ii. 7, 8) comes in these verses to shew, that mens parentage and relation shall not alter the case either one way or other.

1. He applies it largely, and particularly both ways. As it was in the royal line of the kings of Judah, so it often happens in private families, that godly parents have wicked children, and wicked parents have godly children. Now here he shews,

(1.) That a *wicked man* shall certainly *perish in his iniquity*, though he was the son of a *pious father*. If that righteous man before described *beget a son* whose character is the reverse of his father's, his condition will certainly be so too. (1.) It is supposed, as no uncommon case but a very melancholy one, that the child of a very godly father, notwithstanding all the instructions given him, the good education he has had, and the needful rebukes that have been given him, and the restraints he has been laid under, after all the pains taken with him, the prayers put up for him, may yet prove notoriously wicked and vile, the grief of his father, the shame of his family, and the curse and plague of his generation. He is here supposed to allow himself in all these enormities which his good father dreaded, and carefully avoided; and to shake off all those good *duties* which his father made conscience of, and took satisfaction in, undoes all that his father did, and goes counter to his example in every thing. He is here described to be a highwayman, *a robber, and a shedder of blood*; an idolater, he hath *eaten upon the mountains*, ver. 11. and has *lifted up his eyes to the idols*, which his good father never did, and has come at length not only to feast with the idolaters, but to sacrifice with them, which is here called *committing abomination*, for the way of sin is down hill. He is an adulterer, hath *defiled his neighbour's wife*; an oppressor even of *the poor and needy*, he robs the spittal, and squeezeth those who he knows cannot right themselves, and takes a pride and pleasure in trampling upon the weak, and impoverishing those that are poor already. He *takes away* from those to whom he should *give*. He hath *spoiled by violence*, and open force, he hath *given forth upon usury*, and so spoiled by contract; and *hath not restored the pledge*, but unjustly detained it, even when the debt was paid. Let those good parents that have wicked children not look upon their case as singular; it is a case put here; and by it we see, that grace doth not run in a blood, nor always attend the means of grace; nor is the race always to the swift, or the battle to the strong, for then the children that are well taught would do well; but God will let us know that his grace is his own, and his spirit a free agent; and that though we are tied to give our children a good education he is not tied to bless it. In this as much as any thing appears the power of original sin, and the necessity of special grace. (2.) We are here assured that this wicked man shall perish for ever in his iniquity, notwithstanding his being the son of a good father. He may perhaps prosper a while in the world for the sake of the piety of his ancestors, but having *committed all these abominations*, and never repented of them *he shall not live*, he shall not be happy in the favour of God, though he may escape the sword of men, he shall not escape the curse of God, *he shall surely die*, he shall be for ever miserable; *his blood shall be upon him*, he may thank himself, he is his own destroyer; and his relation to a good father will be so far from standing him in stead that it will agravate his sin, and his condemnation. It made his sin the more heinous, nay it made him really the more vile and profligate, and consequently will make his misery hereafter the more intolerable.

(2.) That a righteous man shall be *certainly happy*, though he is the son of a *wicked father*. Though the father did *eat the sowre grapes*, if the children do not meddle with them they shall fare never the worse for that. Here,

1. It is supposed, and blessed be God it is sometimes a case in fact, that the son of an ungodly father may be godly; that observing how fatal his father's errors were, he may be so wise as to *take warning*, and not tread in his father's steps, *ver.* 14. Ordinarily children partake of the parents temper, and are drawn in to imitate their example; but here the son instead of *seeing his father's sins*, and, as is usual, doing the like, sees them and dreads doing the like. *Men* indeed do not *gather grapes of thorns*, but God sometimes doth; takes a branch from a wild olive, and grafts it into a good one. Wicked Ahaz begets a good Hezekiah, who *sees all his father's sins which he hath done*, and tho' he will not like Ham proclaim his father's shame, or make the worst of it, yet he loaths it, and blushes at it, and thinks the worse of sin because it was the reproach and ruin of his own father. *He considereth, and doth not such like*; considers how ill it became his father to do such things, what an offence it was to God and all good men, what a wound and dishonour he got by it, and what calamities he brought into his family, and therefore he *doth not such like*. Note, If we did but duly *consider the ways* of wicked men, we would all dread being associates with them and followers of them. The particulars are here again enumerated almost in the same words with that character given of the just man, *ver.* 6, *&c.* to shew how good men *walk in the same spirit and in the same steps*. This just man here when he took care to avoid his father's sins, took care to imitate his grandfather's virtues; and if we look back we shall find some examples for our imitation, as well as others for our admonition. This just man cannot only say as the Pharisee, *I am no adulterer, no extortioner*, no oppressor, no usurer, no idolater; but he hath *given his bread to the hungry*, and *covered the naked*; he hath *taken off his hand from the poor*; where he found his father had put hardships upon poor servants, tenants, neighbours, he eased their burthen; did not say what my father has done I will abide by, and if it was a fault it was his, and not mine, as Rehoboam who contemned the taxes his father had imposed; no, he *takes his hand off from the poor*, and restores them to their rights and liberties again, *ver.* 15, 16, 17. Thus he hath *executed God's judgments*, and *walked in his statutes*, not only done his duty for once, but gone on in a course and way of obedience.

2. We are assured that the *graceless father* alone shall die in his iniquity, but this *gracious son* shall fare never the worse for it. As for his father, *ver* 18. because he was a *cruel oppressor* and *did hurt*, nay because tho' he had wealth and power, he did not with it *do good among his people*; lo, *even he*, as great as he is, *shall die in his iniquity*, and be undone for ever; but he that kept his integrity *shall surely live*; shall be easy and happy, and he shall not *die for the iniquity of his father*. Perhaps his father's wickedness has lessened his estate, and weakened his interest, but it shall be no prejudice at all to his acceptance with God, and his eternal welfare.

2. He appeals to themselves then whether they did not wrong God with their proverb. Thus plain the case is, and *yet ye say, Doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father?* No, he doth not; he shall not if he will himself *do that which is lawful and right*, ver. 19. But this people that bare the iniquity of their fathers had not done that which is lawful and right, and therefore justly suffered for *their own* sin, and had no reason to complain of God's proceedings against them as at all *unjust*, tho' they had reason to complain of the ill example their fathers had left them as very *unkind*; *Our fathers have sinned and are not, and we have born their iniquity*, Lam. v. 7. It is true that there is a curse entailed upon wicked families, but it is as true that the *entail* may be cut *off* by repentance and reformation, let the impenitent and unreformed therefore thank themselves if they fall under it. The settled rule of judgment is therefore repeated, *ver.* 20. *The soul that sinneth it shall die*, and not another for it. What direction God hath given to earthly judges, *Deut.* xxiv. 16. he will himself pursue; *The son shall not die*, not die eternally, *for the iniquity of the father*, if he do not tread in the steps of it, nor the father *for the iniquity of the son*, if he endeavour to do his duty for the preventing of it. In *the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God*, which is now clouded and eclipsed, *the righteousness of the righteous shall* appear before all the world, to be *upon him* to his everlasting comfort and honour, upon him as a robe upon him as a crown; and *the wickedness of the wicked upon him* to his everlasting confusion, upon him as a chain, upon him as a load, as a mountain of lead to sink him to the bottomless pit.

21. But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath commited, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live he shall not die. 22. All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him in his righteousness that he hath done, he shall live. 23. Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD: *and* not that he should return from his ways, and live? 24. ¶ But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, *and* doth according to all the abominations that the wicked *man* doth, shall he live? all his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die. 25. ¶ Yet ye say, The way of the LORD is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel, is not my way equal

are not your ways unequal? 26. When a righteous *man* turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them; for his iniquity that he hath done, shall he die. 27. Again, when the wicked *man* turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive. 28. Because he considereth, and turneth away from all his transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die. 29. Yet saith the house of Israel, The way of the LORD is not equal. O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal?

We have here another rule of judgment which God will go by in dealing with us, by which is further demonstrated the equity of his government; the former shewed that God will reward or punish according to the change made in the family or succession, for the better, or for the worse; here he shews that he will reward or punish according to the change made in the person himself, whether for the better, or the worse. While we are in this world we are in a state of probation, the time of trial lasts as long as the time of life, and according as we are *found at last*, it will be with us to eternity. Now see here,

1. The case fairly stated, much as it had been before, *chap.* iii. 18, &c. and here it is laid down once, *ver.* 21—24. And again, *ver.* 26—28. because it is a matter of vast importance, a matter of life and death, of life and death eternal. Here we have,

1. A *fair invitation* given to *wicked* people to *turn from their wickedness*. Assurance is here given us, that *if the wicked will turn*, he shall *surely live*, ver. 21, 27.

Observe, (1.) What is required to denominate a man a *true convert*; how he must be qualified that he may be entitled to this act of indemnity. (1.) The first step towards conversion is consideration, *ver.* 28. *Because he considereth and turneth.* The reason why sinners go on in their evil ways is, because they do not *consider* what will be *in the end thereof*; But if the prodigal once *come to himself*, if he sit down and *consider* a little how bad his state is, and how easily it may be bettered, he will soon *return to his father*, Luke xv. 17. and the adulteress *to her first husband*, when she considers that *then it was better with her than now*, Hos. ii. 7. (2.) This consideration must produce an aversion to sin. When he considereth he must *turn away from his wickedness*, that notes a change in the heart, and in the disposition of that; he must turn from *his sins and his transgressions*, that notes a change in the life; he must break off from all his evil courses, and wherein he has done iniquity must resolve to do so no more, and this from a principle of hatred to sin; *What have I to do any more with idols?* (3.) This aversion to sin must be *universal*; he must turn from *all* his sins, and *all* his transgressions, without a reserve for any Delilah, any house of Rimmon; we do not *rightly* turn from sin unless we *truly* hate it, and we do not truly hate sin *as sin*, if we do not hate *all sin*. (4.) This must be accompanied with a conversion to God and duty; he must *keep all God's statutes*, (for the obedience if it be *sincere* will be *universal*) and must *do that which is lawful and right*, which agrees with the word and will of God, which he must take for his rule, and not the wills of the flesh, and the way of the world.

(2.) What is promised to those that do thus *turn from sin* to God. (1.) They shall *save their souls alive*, ver. 27. They shall *surely live, they shall not die*, ver. 21. and again, *ver.* 28. whereas it was said, *The soul that sins it shall die*, yet let not those that have sinned despair but that the threatned death may be prevented, if they will but turn and repent in time. When David penitently acknowledgeth, *I have sinned*, he is immediately assured of his pardon, *The Lord has taken away thy sin, thou shalt not die*, 2 Sam. xii. 13. thou shalt not die eternally. He shall *surely live*, i. e. he shall be restored to the favour of God, which is the life of the soul, and shall not lie under *his wrath* which is as *messengers of death* to the soul. (2.) The sins they have repented of and forsaken shall not rise up in judgment against them, nor shall they be so much as upbraided with them. *All his transgressions that he has committed*, tho' numerous, tho' heinous, tho' very provoking to God, and redounding very much to his dishonour, yet *they shall not be mentioned unto him*, ver. 22. not mentioned *against* him; not only they shall not be *imputed* to him to *ruin* him, but in the great day they shall not be *remembred against him* to grieve or shame him; they shall be *covered*, shall be sought for and not found. This speaks the fulness of pardoning mercy; when sin is forgiven it is *blotted out*, it is *remembred no more* (3.) In *their righteousness they shall live*; not for their righteousness, as if that were the purchase of their pardon and bliss, and an atonement for their sins; but in their righteousness, which qualifies them for all the blessings purchased by the Mediator, and is itself one of those blessings.

(3.) What encouragement a repenting returning sinner hath to hope for pardon and life according to this promise. He is conscious to himself that his obedience for the future can never be a valuable compensation for his former disobedience; but he has this to support himself with, that God's *nature, property*, and delight, is *to have mercy and to forgive*, for he hath said, *ver.* 23. *Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?* no, by no means, you never had any cause given you to think so. It is true, that God has determined to punish sinners, his justice calls for it, and pursuant to that impenitent sinners will lie for ever under his wrath and curse; that is the will of his decree, his consequent will, but it is not his antecedent will, the will of his delight; tho' the righteousness of his government requires that sinners die, yet the goodness of his nature objects against it, *How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?* It is spoken here comparatively; he hath not pleasure in the ruin of sinners, for he would rather they should *turn from their ways and live*; he is better pleased when his mercy is glorified in their salvation, than when his justice is glorified in their damnation.

2. A *fair warning* given to *righteous people*, not to turn *from their righteousness*, ver. 24—26. Here is, (1.) The character of an apostate, that *turns away from his righteousness*: he never was in sincerity a *righteous man*, as appears by that of the apostle, 1 *John* ii. 19. *If they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us*, but he passed for a righteous man, had the denomination and all the external marks of a righteous man, he thought himself one, and others thought him one, but he throws off his profession, leaves his first love, disowns and forsakes the truth and ways of God, and so *turns away from his righteousness*, as one sick of it, and now shews, what he always had, a secret aversion to it: and having *turned away from his righteousness*, he *commits iniquity*, grows loose, and profane, and sensual, intemperate, unjust, and, in short, *doth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doth*, for when the unclean spirit recovers his possession of the heart, he *brings with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there*, Luke xi. 26. (2.) The doom of an apostate; *shall he live* because he was once a *righteous man?* no, *factum non dicitur quod non perseverat. In* his trespass, *ver.* 24. and *for* his iniquity, (that is the meritorious cause of his ruin) *for* the iniquity *that he has done he shall die*, shall die eternally, *ver.* 26. *The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways.* But will not his former professions and performances stand him in some stead, will they not avail at least to mitigate his punishment? no, *All his righteousness that he has done*, tho' never so much applauded by men, *shall not be mentioned*, so as to be either a credit or a comfort to him; the righteousness of an apostate is forgotten, as the wickedness of a penitent is. Under the law, if a Nazarite were polluted he lost all his foregoing days of his separation, *Numb.* vi. 12. so those that have *begun in the spirit and end in the flesh*, may reckon all their past services and sufferings *in vain*, Gal. iii. 3, 4. unless we persevere we *lose what we have gained*, 2 John 8.

2. An appeal to the consciences even of the house of Israel, tho' very corrupt concerning God's equity in all these proceedings; for he will be *justified*, as well as sinners judged, out of their own mouths. (1.) The charge they drew up against God is blasphemous, *ver.* 25, 29. the *house of Israel* has the impudence to say, *The way of the Lord is not equal*; than which nothing could be more absurd as well as impious; *He that formed the eye shall he not see?* Can his ways be unequal whose will is the eternal rule of good and evil, right and wrong? *Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?* no doubt he shall, he cannot do otherwise. (2.) God's reasonings with them are very gracious and condescending, for even these blasphemers God would rather have convinced and saved than condemned. One would have expected that God should have immediately vindicated the honour of his justice by making those that impeached it eternal monuments of it; must these be suffered to draw another breath that have once breathed out such wickedness as this? Shall that tongue ever speak again any where but in hell that has once said, *The ways of the Lord are not equal?* Yes, because this is the day of God's patience, he vouchsafes to argue with them; and he requires them to own, for it is so plain that they cannot deny, (1.) The equity of his ways; *Are not my ways equal?* no doubt they are. He never lays upon man more than is right. In the present punishments of sinners, and the afflictions of his own people, yea and in the eternal damnation of the impenitent *the ways of the Lord are equal.* (2.) The iniquity of their ways. *Are not your ways unequal?* It is plain they are, and the troubles you are in you have brought upon your own heads; God doth you no wrong but you have wronged your selves. *The foolishness of man perverts his way*, makes that unequal, and then *his heart frets against the Lord*, as if his ways were unequal, *Prov.* xix. 3. In all our disputes with God, and in all controversies with us, it will be found that *his ways are equal*, but *ours are unequal*, that he is in the right, and we are in the wrong.

30. Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord GOD: repent, and turn *your selves* from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. 31. ¶ Cast away

away from you all your tranſgreſſions, whereby ye have have tranſgreſſed, and make you a new heart, and a new ſpirit; for why will ye die, O houſe of Iſrael? 32. For I have no pleaſure in the death of him that dieth, ſaith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn *your ſelves*, and live ye.

We have here the concluſion and application of this whole matter. After a fair trial at the bar of right reaſon, the verdict is brought in on God's ſide, it appears that *his ways are equal*; judgment therefore is next to be given; and one would think it ſhould be a judgment of condemnation, nothing ſhort of *Go, ye curſed, into everlaſting fire*; but behold a miracle of mercy; the day of grace and divine patience is yet lengthned out; and therefore tho' God will at laſt judge *every one according to his ways*, yet he waits to be gracious, and cloſes all with a call to repentance, and a promiſe of pardon upon repentance.

1. Here are four neceſſary duties that we are called to; all amounting to the ſame. (1.) We muſt *repent*; we muſt change our mind, and change our ways; we muſt be ſorry for what we have done amiſs, and aſhamed of it, and go as far as we can towards the undoing of it again. (2.) We muſt *turn ourſelves from all our tranſgreſſions*, ver. 30. and again, *ver.* 32. *Turn your ſelves*, face about; turn *from ſin*, nay turn againſt it as the enemy you loath, turn to God as the friend you love. (3.) We muſt *caſt away from us all our tranſgreſſions*, we muſt abandon and forſake them with a reſolution never to return to them again; give ſin a bill of divorce, break all the leagues we have made with it, throw it over-board as the mariners did Jonah, for it has raiſed the ſtorm; caſt it out of the ſoul and crucify it, as a malefactor. (4.) We muſt *make us a new heart, and a new ſpirit*. This was the matter of a promiſe, *chap.* xi. 19. here it is the matter of a precept; we muſt do our endeavour, and then God will not be wanting to us to give us his grace: St Auſtin well explains this precept; *Deus non jubet impoſſibilia, ſed jubendo monet & facere quod poſſis, & petere quod non poſſis.* He hereby admoniſhes us to *do* what is in our power, and *to pray for* what is not.

2. Here are four good arguments uſed to enforce theſe calls to repentance. (1.) It is the only way, and it is a ſure way to prevent the ruin which our ſins have a direct tendency to. *So iniquity ſhall not be your ruin*, which implies, that if we do not repent iniquity will be our ruin, here and for ever; but if we do, we are ſafe, we are ſnatched as brands out of the burning. (2.) If we repent not we certainly periſh, and our blood will be upon our own heads. *Why will ye die, O houſe of Iſrael?* What an abſurd thing it is for you to chuſe death and damnation rather than life and ſalvation. Note, The reaſon why ſinners die is becauſe they *will die*, they will go down the way that leads to death, and not come up to the terms on which life is offered; herein ſinners, eſpecially ſinners of the houſe of Iſrael, are moſt unreaſonable, and act moſt unaccountably. (3.) The God of heaven has no delight in our ruin, but deſires our welfare, *ver.* 32. *I have no pleaſure in the death of him that dieth*, which implies that he has pleaſure in the recovery of thoſe that repent; which is both an engagement and an encouragement to us to repent. (4.) We are made for ever if we repent; *turn your ſelves, and live ye.* He that ſaith to us repent, thereby ſaith to us, live, yea he ſaith to us, live; ſo that life and death are here ſet before us.

CHAP. XIX.

The ſcope of this chapter is much the ſame with that of the 17th, to foretel and lament the ruin of the houſe of David, *the royal family of Judah; in the calamitous exit of the four ſons and grandſons of Joſiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jeconiah, and Zedekiah, in whom that illuſtrious line of kings was cut off, which the prophet is here ordered to lament,* ver. 1. *And he doth it by ſimilitudes.* (1.) *The kingdom of Judah and houſe of David is here compared to a lioneſs, and thoſe princes to lions, that were fierce and ravenous, but were hunted down and taken in nets,* ver. 2—9. (2.) *That kingdom and houſe are here compared to a vine, and theſe princes to branches, that had been ſtrong and flouriſhing, but were now broken off and burnt,* ver. 10—14. *This ruin of that monarchy was now in the doing, and this lamentation of it was intended to affect the people with it, that they might not flatter themſelves with vain hopes of the lengthning out their tranquillity.*

1. MOreover, take thou up a lamentation for the princes of Iſrael, 2. And ſay, What *is* thy mother? a lioneſs: ſhe lay down among lions, ſhe nouriſhed her whelps among young lions. 3. And ſhe brought up one of her whelps: it became a young lion, and it learned to catch the prey, it devoured men. 4. The nations alſo heard of him, he was taken in their pit, and they brought him with chains unto the land of Egypt. 5. Now when ſhe ſaw that ſhe had waited, *and* her hope was loſt, then ſhe took another of her whelps, *and* made him a young lion. 6. And he went up and down among the lions, he became a young lion, and learned to catch the prey, *and* devoured men. 7. And he knew their deſolate palaces, and he laid waſte their cities, and the land was deſolate, and the fulneſs thereof by the noiſe of his roring. 8. Then the nations ſet againſt him on every ſide from the provinces, and ſpread their net over him: he was taken in their pit. 9. And they put him in ward in chains, and brought him to the king of Babylon; they brought him into holds, that his voice ſhould no more be heard upon the mountains of Iſrael.

Here is, 1. Orders given to the prophet to bewail the fall of the royal family, which had long made ſo great a figure by virtue of a covenant of royalty made with David and his ſeed, that the eclipſing and extinguiſhing of it is juſtly lamented by all that know what value to put upon the *covenant of our God:* as we find after a very large account of that covenant with David, *Pſal.* lxxxix. 3, 20, *&c.* a ſad lamentation for the decays and deſolations of his family, *ver.* 38, 39. *But thou haſt caſt off and abhorred, haſt made void the covenant of thy ſervant, and profaned his crown,* &c. The *kings* of Judah are here called *princes of Iſrael*; for their *glory* was diminiſhed, and they were become but as *princes*; and their *purity* was loſt, they were become corrupt and idolatrous as the *kings of Iſrael*, whoſe ways they had learned. The prophet muſt *take up a lamentation* for them; *i. e.* he muſt deſcribe their lamentable fall, as one that did himſelf lay it to heart, and deſired thoſe he preached to and wrote to might do ſo too. And how can we expect others ſhould be *affected with* that which we our ſelves are not *affected with?* And miniſters when they boldly foretel, yet muſt bitterly lament the deſtruction of ſinners, as thoſe that have not *deſired the woful day.* He is not directed to *give advice* to the princes of Iſrael, that had been long and often done in vain; but the decree being gone forth, he muſt *take up a lamentation* for them.

2. Inſtructions given him what to ſay.

1. He muſt compare the kingdom of Judah to a *lioneſs*; ſo wretchedly degenerated was it from what it had been formerly, when it ſat as a queen among the nations, *ver.* 2. *What is thy mother?* Thine, O king? We read of Solomon's crown wherewith his mother crowned him, *i. e.* his people, *Cant.* iii. 11. Thine, O Judah? The royal family is as a mother to the kingdom, a nurſing mother. She is a *lioneſs*, fierce and cruel, and ravenous. When they had left their divinity they ſoon loſt their humanity too; and when they *feared not God*, neither did they *regard man.* She *lay down among lions*; God had ſaid, *the people* ſhall dwell alone, but they *mingled themſelves with the nations*, and *learned their works*; ſhe *nouriſhed her whelps among young lions*, taught the young princes the way of tyrants, which was then uſed by the arbitrary kings of the *eaſt*, filled their heads betimes with notions of their abſolute deſpotick power, and poſſeſſed them with a belief that they had right to enſlave their ſubjects, that their liberty and property lay at their mercy: thus *ſhe nouriſhed her whelps among young lions.*

2. He muſt compare the kings of Judah to *lions whelps*, ver. 3. Jacob had compared Judah, and eſpecially the houſe of David, to a *lion's whelp*, for its being ſtrong and formidable to its enemies abroad, *Gen.* xlix. 9. *He is as an old lion, who ſhall ſtir him up?* And if they had adhered to the divine law and promiſe, God had preſerved to them the might and majeſty, and dominion of a lion; and doth it in Chriſt, the *lion of the tribe of Judah:* but theſe *lions whelps* were ſo to their own ſubjects, were cruel and oppreſſive to them, preyed upon their eſtates and liberties; and when they thus by their tyranny made themſelves a terror to thoſe whom they ought to have protected, it was juſt with God to make thoſe a terror to them whom otherwiſe they might have ſubdued. Here is lamented, 1. The ſin and fall of Jehoahaz, one of the whelps of this lioneſs. He *became a young lion*, ver. 3. he was made king, and thought he was made ſo that he might do what he pleaſed, and gratify his own ambition, covetouſneſs, and revenge, as he had a mind, and ſo he was ſoon maſter of all the arts of tyranny, he *learned to catch the prey, and devoured men*; when he got power in his hand, all that had before in any thing diſobliged him were made to feel his reſentments, and become a ſacrifice to his rage. But what came of it? He did not proſper long in his tyranny; the *nations heard of him*, ver. 4. heard how furiouſly he drove at his firſt coming to the crown, how he trampled upon all that is juſt and ſacred, and violated all his engagements, ſo that

that they looked upon him as a dangerous neighbour, and prosecuted him accordingly. *As a multitude of shepherds is called forth against a lion roaring on his prey*, Isa. xxxi. 4. And *he was taken*, as a beast of prey, *in their pit*. His own subjects durst not stand up in defence of their own liberties, but God raised up a foreign power that soon put an end to his tyranny, and *brought him in chains to the land of Egypt*. Thither Jehoahaz was carried captive, and never heard of more.

2. The like sin and fall of his successor Jehoiakim. The *kingdom of Judah* for some time expected the return of Jehoahaz out of Egypt, but at length despaired of it, and then *took another* of the *lion's* whelps, and *made him a young lion*, ver. 5. And he, instead of taking warning by his brother's fate, to use his power with equity and moderation, and to seek the good of his people, trod in his brother's steps; *he went up and down among the lions*, ver. 6. He consulted and conversed with those that were fierce and furious like himself, and took his measures from them, as Rehoboam took the advice of the rash and hot-headed young men; and he soon learned to *catch the prey*, and he *devoured men*, ver. 6. he seized his subjects estates, fined and imprisoned them, filled his treasury by rapine, and injustice, sequestrations and confiscations, fines and forfeitures, and swallowed up all that stood in his way: he had got the art of discovering what effects men had that lay concealed, and where the treasures were which they had hoarded up; he *knew their desolate places*, ver. 7. where they hid *their money*, and sometimes hid *themselves*; he knew where to find both out; and by his oppression he *laid waste their cities*, depopulated them by forcing the inhabitants to remove their families to some place of safety: *The land was desolate*, and the country villages were deserted, and though there was great plenty, and a fulness of all good things, yet people quitted it all for fear of *the noise of his roaring*. He took a pride in making all his subjects afraid of him, as the lion makes all the beasts of the forest to tremble, *Amos* iii. 8. and by his terrible roaring so astonished them that they fell down for fear, and having not spirit to make their escape, became an easy prey to him, as they say the lions do. He hectored and threatned, and talked big, and bullied people out of what they had. Thus he thought to have established his own power, but it had a contrary effect, it did but hasten his own ruin, *ver.* 8. *The nations set against him on every side*, to restrain and reduce his exorbitant power, which they joined in confederacy to do for their common safety; and *they spread their net over him*, formed designs against him. God brought against Jehoiakim bands of the Syrians, Moabites, and Ammonites, with the Chaldees, 2 *Kings* xxiv. 2. and he was *taken in their pit*. *Nebuchadnezzar bound him in fetters to carry him to Babylon*, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 6. They put this lion within grates, bound him *in chains*, and *brought him to the king of Babylon*, ver. 9. What became of him we know not, but *his voice was no where heard* roaring *upon the mountains of Israel*. There was an end of his tyranny: he was *buried with the burial of an ass*, Jer. xxii. 19. though he had been as a lion, *the terror of the mighty in the land of the living*. Note, The righteousness of God is to be acknowledged when those that have terrified and enslaved others, are themselves terrified and enslaved; when those that, by the abuse of their power to *destruction*, which was given them for *edification*, make themselves as wild beasts, as *roaring lions and ranging bears*, for such Solomon saith, *wicked rulers* are *over the poor people*, Prov. xxviii. 15. are treated as such; when those who like Ishmael have their *hand against every man*, come at last to have *every man's hand against them*. It was long since observed that bloody tyrants seldom die in peace, but have blood given them to drink, for they are worthy.

Ad generum Cereris sine cæde & sanguine pauci
Descendunt reges & sicca morte tyranni. Juvenal.

10. ¶ Thy mother *is* like a vine in thy blood, planted by the waters, she was fruitful, and full of branches by reason of many waters. 11. And she had strong rods, for the sceptres of them that bear rule, and her stature was exalted among the thick branches, and she appeared in her height with the multitude of her branches. 12. But she was plucked up in fury, she was cast down to the ground, and the east-wind dried up her fruit: her strong rods were broken and withered, the fire consumed them. 13. And now she *is* planted in the wilderness, in a dry and thirsty ground. 14. And fire is gone out of a rod of her branches, *which* hath devoured her fruit, so that she hath no strong rod *to be* a sceptre to rule: this *is* a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation.

Jerusalem, the mother city, is here represented by another similitude; she is a vine, and the princes are her branches. This comparison we had before, *chap.* xv.

1. Jerusalem is as *a vine*; the Jewish nation is so; like a *vine in thy blood*, ver. 10. the blood royal; like a vine set in blood and watered with blood, which contributes very much to the flourishing and fruitfulness of vines; as if the blood which thou hast shed had been designed for the fatning and improving of the soil; in such plenty was it shed; and for a time it seemed to have that effect, for she was *fruitful and full of branches*, by reason of the waters, the *many waters*, near which she was *planted*. Places of great wickedness may prosper for a while. And a vine *set in blood* may be *full of branches*. Jerusalem was full of able magistrates, men of sense, men of learning and experience, that were *strong rods*, branches of this vine, of uncommon bulk and strength. Or, poles for the support of this vine; for so magistrates are. The boughs of this vine were grown to such maturity that they were fit to make white staves of, for *the sceptres of them that bear rule*, ver. 11. And they are *strong rods* only that are fit for *sceptres*, men of strong judgments, and strong resolutions, that are fit for magistrates. When the royal family of Judah was numerous, and the courts of justice filled with men of sense and probity, then *Jerusalem's stature was exalted among thick branches*; when the government is in good able hands, a nation is thereby made considerable. Then she was not taken for a weak and lowly vine; but *she appeared in her height*, a topping city, *with the multitude of her branches*; *tanquam lenta solent inter viburna cupressi. In thy quietness*, so some read that, *ver.* 10. which we translate *in thy blood*, thou wast such a vine as this; when Zedekiah was quiet and easy under the king of Babylon's yoke, his kingdom flourished thus. See how slow God is to anger, how he defers his judgments, and waits to be gracious.

2. This *vine* is now quite destroyed, Nebuchadnezzar being highly provoked by Zedekiah's treachery *plucked it up in fury*, ver. 12. ruined the city and kingdom, and cut off all the branches of the royal family that fell in his way. The vine was *cut off close to the ground*, though not plucked up by the roots, the *east-wind dried up the fruit* that was blasted, the young people fell by the sword, or were carried into captivity. The aspect of it had nothing that was *pleasing*, the prospect nothing that was *promising*. Her *strong rods were broken and withered*, her great men were cut off, judges and magistrates deposed; *the vine itself is planted in the wilderness*, ver. 13. Babylon was as a *wilderness* to those of the people that were carried captives thither; the land of Judah was as a *wilderness* to Jerusalem, now the whole country was ravaged and laid waste by the Chaldean army; a *fruitful land turned into barrenness*. It is *burnt with fire*, Psal. lxxx. 16. and that fire is *gone out of a rod of her branches*, ver. 14. *i. e.* the king himself by rebelling against the king of Babylon has given occasion to all this mischief: she may thank her self for the fire that consumes her; she has by her wickedness made her self like tinder to the sparks of God's wrath, so that her own branches serve as fuel for her own consumption; in them the fire is kindled, which *devoured the fruit*, the sins of the elder being the judgments which destroy the younger; her *fruit* is burned with her own branches, so that she *has no strong rod to be a sceptre to rule*: none to be found now that are fit for the government, or dare take *this ruin under their hand*, as the complaint is, *Isa.* iii. 6, 7. None of the house of David left that have right to rule, no wise men, or men of sense, that are able to rule. It goes ill with any state, and is like to go worse when it is thus deprived of the blessings of government, and has *no strong rods for sceptres*. *Wo unto thee, O land, when thy king is a child*, for as good have no rod, as not a strong rod. Those strong rods we have reason to fear had been instruments of oppression, assistant to the king in *catching the prey, and devouring men*, and now they are destroyed with him. Tyranny is the inlet to anarchy; and when the rod of government is turned into the serpent of oppression, it is just with God to say, There shall be no strong rod to be a sceptre to rule; but let men be as *are the fishes of the sea*, where the greater devour the lesser. Note, *This is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation*. The prophet was bidden, *ver.* 1. to *take up a lamentation*, and having done so he leaves it to be made use of by others. *It is a lamentation* to us of this age, and the desolations continuing long, it *shall be for a lamentation* to those that shall come after us; the child unborn will rue the destruction made of Judah and Jerusalem by the present judgments. They were a great while in coming, the bow was long in the drawing, but now they are come they will continue, and the sad effects of them will be entailed upon posterity. Note, Those who fill up the measure of their fathers sins are laying up in store for their childrens sorrows, and furnishing them with matter for lamentation; and nothing is more so than the overthrow of government.

CHAP. XX.

In this chapter, (1.) *The prophet is consulted by some of the elders of Israel*, ver. 1. (2.) *He is instructed by his God what answer to give them. He must*, (1.) *Signify God's displeasure against them*, ver. 2, 3. *And*, (2.) *He must shew them what just cause he had for that displeasure; by giving them a history of God's grateful dealings with their fathers, and their treacherous dealings*

ings with God. (1.) *In Egypt,* ver. 1—9. (2.) *In the wilderneſs,* ver. 10—26. (3.) *In Canaan,* ver. 27—32. (3.) *He muſt denounce the judgments of God againſt them,* ver. 33—36. (4.) *He muſt tell them likewiſe what mercy God had in ſtore for them, when he would bring a remnant of them to repentance, reeſtabliſh them in their own land, and ſet up his ſanctuary among them again,* ver. 37—44. (5.) *Here is another word dropped towards Jeruſalem, which is explained and enlarged upon in the next chapter,* ver. 45—49.

1. AND it came to paſs in the ſeventh year, in the fifth *month,* the tenth *day* of the month, *that* certain of the elders of Iſrael came to enquire of the LORD, and ſat before me. 2. Then came the word of the LORD unto me, ſaying, 3. Son of man, ſpeak unto the elders of Iſrael, and ſay unto them, Thus ſaith the Lord GOD, Are ye come to enquire of me? *as* I live, ſaith the Lord GOD, I will not be enquired of by you. 4. Wilt thou judge them, ſon of man, wilt thou judge *them?* cauſe them to know the abominations of their fathers:

Here is, 1. The occaſion of this meſſage, which we have in this chapter. That ſermon which we had, *chap.* xviii. was occaſioned by their preſumptuous reflections upon God; this here was occaſioned by their hypocritical enquiries after him. Each ſhall have their own. This prophecy is exactly dated in the *ſeventh year of the* captivity, about two years after Ezekiel began to propheſy. God would have them to keep count how long their captivity laſted, that they might ſee how the years went on towards their deliverance, tho' very ſlowly, *certain of the elders of Iſrael came to enquire of the Lord,* not ſtatedly, as thoſe *chap.* viii. 1. but, as it ſhould ſeem, occaſionally, and upon a particular emergency. Whether they were of thoſe that were now in captivity, or elders lately come from Jeruſalem, upon buſineſs to Babylon, is not certain; but by what the prophet ſaith to them, *ver.* 32. it ſhould ſeem their enquiry was, whether now they were captives in Babylon, at a diſtance from their own country, where they had not only no temple, but no ſynagogue for the worſhip of God, it was not lawful for them, that they might ingratiate themſelves with their lords and maſters, to join with them in their worſhip, and do *as the families of theſe countries* do, that *ſerve wood and ſtone.* This matter was palliated as well as it would bear, like Naaman's indenting with Eliſha, for leave to bow in the houſe of Rimmon, in compliment to the king; but we have reaſon to ſuſpect that their enquiry drove at this. Note, Thoſe hearts are wretchedly hardened that ask God leave to go on in ſin, and that when they are ſuffering for it. They came and *ſat* very demurely, and with a ſhew of devotion *before the prophet,* chap. xxxiii. 31.

2. The purport of this meſſage.

1. They muſt be made to know, that *God is angry with them,* he takes it as an affront that they are come to enquire of him, when they are reſolved to go on ſtill in their treſpaſſes. *As I live, ſaith the Lord God, I will not be enquired of by you,* ver. 3. Their ſhews of devotion ſhall neither be acceptable to God, nor advantageous to themſelves. God will not take notice of their enquiries, nor give them any ſatisfactory anſwers. Note, An hypocritical attendance on God and his ordinances, is ſo far from being pleaſing to him, that it is provoking.

2. They muſt be made to know that God is juſtly angry with them, *ver.* 4. *Wilt thou judge them, ſon of man, wilt thou judge them?* Thou art a prophet, ſurely thou wilt not *plead for them,* as an interceſſor *with God;* but ſurely thou wilt *paſs ſentence* on them, as a judge *for God. See, I have ſet thee over the nation,* wilt thou not declare to them the judgments of the Lord? Cauſe them therefore *to know the abominations of their fathers;* ſo the orders run now, as before, *chap.* xvi. 2. he muſt cauſe them to *know their own abominations.* Tho' their own abominations were ſufficient to juſtify God in the ſevereſt of his proceedings againſt them, yet it would be of uſe for them to know the *abominations of their fathers;* that they might ſee what a righteous thing it was with God now at laſt to cut them off from being a people, who from the firſt were ſuch a provoking people.

5. ¶ And ſay unto them, Thus ſaith the Lord GOD, In the day when I choſe Iſrael, and lifted up mine hand unto the ſeed of the houſe of Jacob, and made my ſelf known unto them in the land of Egypt, when I lifted up mine hand unto them, ſaying, I *am* the Lord your God, 6. In the day *that* I lifted up mine hand unto them, to bring them forth of the land of Egypt, into a land that I had eſpied for them, flowing with milk and honey, which *is* the glory of all lands: 7. Then ſaid I unto them, Caſt ye away every man the abominations of his eyes, and defile not your ſelves with the idols of Egypt: I *am* the LORD your God. 8. But they rebelled againſt me, and would not hearken unto me: they did not every man caſt away the abominations of their eyes, neither did they forſake the idols of Egypt: then I ſaid, I will pour out my fury upon them, to accompliſh my anger againſt them in the midſt of the land of Egypt. 9. But I wrought for my names ſake, that it ſhould not be polluted before the heathen, among whom they *were,* in whoſe ſight I made my ſelf known unto them, in bringing them forth out of the land of Egypt.

The hiſtory of the ingratitude and rebellion of the people of Iſrael here begins as early as their beginning; ſo doth the hiſtory of man's apoſtaſy from his Maker. No ſooner have we read the ſtory of our firſt parents creation, but immediately we meet with that of their rebellion; ſo we ſee here it was with Iſrael; a people deſigned to repreſent the body of mankind, both in their dealings with God, and his with them. Here is,

1. The gracious purpoſes of God's law concerning Iſrael in Egypt, where they were bond-ſlaves to Pharaoh. Be it ſpoken, be it written, to the immortal honour of free grace, that then and there (1.) He choſe Iſrael to be a peculiar people to himſelf, tho' their condition was bad, and their character worſe, that he might have the honour of mending both. He therefore choſe them becauſe they were *the ſeed of the houſe of Jacob,* the poſterity of that prince with God, *that he might keep the oath which he had ſworn unto their fathers,* Deut. vii. 7, 8. (2.) He *made himſelf known to them,* by his name Jehovah, a new name, *Exod.* vi. 3. when by reaſon of their ſervitude they had almoſt loſt the knowledge of that name, by which he was known to their fathers, God almighty. Note, As the foundation of our bleſſedneſs is laid in God's chuſing us, ſo the firſt ſtep towards it is God's *making himſelf known to us.* And whatever diſtance we are at, whatever diſtreſs we are in, he that made himſelf known to Iſrael even *in the land of Egypt,* can find us out, and follow us with the gracious diſcoveries and manifeſtations of his favour. (3.) He made over himſelf to them as their God in covenant. *I lift up my hand unto them,* ſaying it and confirming it with an oath, *I am the Lord your God,* to whom you are to pay your homage, and from whom and in whom you are to expect your bliſs. (4.) He promiſed to bring them out of Egypt, and made good what he promiſed. He *lifted up his hand,* i. e. he ſware unto them that he would deliver them; and they being very unworthy, and their deliverance very unlikely, it was requiſite the promiſe of it ſhould be *confirmed by an oath.* Or, he *lifted up his hand,* i. e. he put forth his almighty power to do it; he did it with an *out-ſtretched arm,* Pſal. cxxxvi. 12. (5.) He aſſured them that he would put them in poſſeſſion of the land of Canaan. He therefore brought them out of Egypt, *that he might bring them into a land that he had ſpied* out *for them*; a ſecond garden of Eden, which was *the glory of all lands*; ſo he found it, the climate temperate, the ſoil fruitful, the ſituation pleaſant, and every thing agreeable, *Deut.* viii. 7, and 11, 12. However ſo he made it, by ſetting up his ſanctuary in it.

2. The reaſonable commands he gave them, and the eaſy conditions of his covenant with them at that time; having told them what they might expect from him, he next tells them what was all he expected from them; it was no more but this, *ver.* 7. *Caſt ye away every man* his images that he uſeth for worſhip, that are the adorations, but ſhould be the *abominations of his eyes.* Let him abominate them, and put them out of his ſight, and *defile not your ſelves with the idols of Egypt,* which it ſeems many of them were fond of; the golden calf was one of them. It was juſt, and what might reaſonably be expected, that being delivered from the Egyptian ſlavery they ſhould quit the Egyptian idolatry; eſpecially when God at bringing them out *executed judgment upon the gods of Egypt,* Num. xxxiii. 4. and thereby ſhewed himſelf above them. And whatever other idols they might have an inclination to, one would think they ſhould have a rooted averſion to the gods of Egypt, for Egypt's ſake, which had been to them a houſe of bondage: Yet it ſeems they needed this caution, and it is backed with a good reaſon, *I am the Lord your God,* who neither need an aſſiſtant, nor will admit a rival.

3. Their unreaſonable diſobedience to theſe commands, for which God might juſtly have cut them off as ſoon as ever they were formed into a people. *Ver.* 8. *They rebelled againſt God;* not only refuſed to comply with his particular precepts, but ſhook off their allegiance, and, in effect, told him they would be at liberty to worſhip what god they pleaſed: And even then when God came down to deliver them, and ſent Moſes for that purpoſe, yet they would not *forſake the idols of Egypt;* which perhaps made them ſpeak ſo affectionately of the *onions of Egypt,* Num. xi. 5. for among other things the Egyptians worſhipped an onion. It was ſtrange that all the plagues of Egypt would not prevail to cure them of their affection to the *idols of Egypt.* For this,

this, God ſaid he would *pour out his fury upon them*, even while they were yet *in the midſt of the land of Egypt*. Juſtly might he have ſaid, Let them die with the Egyptians. This magnifies the riches of God's goodneſs, that he was pleaſed to work ſo great a ſalvation for them, even then when he ſaw them *ripe for ruin*: Well might Moſes tell them, It is *not for your righteouſneſs*, Deut. ix. 45.

4. The wonderful deliverance which God wrought for them notwithſtanding. Tho' they forfeited the favour while it was in the beſtowing, and when God *would have healed them*, then their *iniquity was diſcovered*, Hoſ. vii. 1. yet *mercy rejoiced againſt judgment*, and God did what he deſigned, purely *for his own names ſake*, ver. 9. When nothing in us will furniſh him with a reaſon for his favours, he furniſheth himſelf with one. God *made himſelf known* to them *in the ſight of the heathen*, when he ordered Moſes publickly to ſay to Pharaoh, Iſrael is *my ſon, my firſt-born*, let them go, *that they may ſerve me*. Now if he ſhould have left them to periſh for their wickedneſs, as they deſerved, the Egyptians would have reflected upon him for it, and his name would have been polluted, which ought to be ſanctified, and ſhall be ſo. Note, The church is ſecured, even when it is corrupt, becauſe God will ſecure his own honour.

10. ¶ Wherefore I cauſed them to go forth out of the land of Egypt, and brought them into the wilderneſs. 11. And I gave them my ſtatutes, and ſhewed them my judgments, which *if* a man do, he ſhall even live in them. 12. Moreover alſo, I gave them my ſabbaths, to be a ſign between me and them, that they might know that I *am* the LORD that ſanctify them. 13. But the houſe of Iſrael rebelled againſt me in the wilderneſs: they walked not in my ſtatutes, and they deſpiſed my judgments, which *if* a man do, he ſhall even live in them; and my ſabbaths they greatly polluted: then I ſaid I would pour out my fury upon them in the wilderneſs to conſume them. 14. But I wrought for my names ſake, that it ſhould not be polluted before the heathen, in whoſe ſight I brought them out. 15. Yet alſo I lifted up my hand unto them in the wilderneſs, that I would not bring them into the land which I had given *them*, flowing with milk and honey, which *is* the glory of all lands: 16. Becauſe they deſpiſed my judgments, and walked not in my ſtatutes, but polluted my ſabbaths: for their heart went after their idols. 17. Nevertheleſs, mine eye ſpared them from deſtroying them, neither did I make an end of them in the wilderneſs. 18. But I ſaid unto their children in the wilderneſs, Walk ye not in the ſtatutes of your fathers, neither obſerve their judgments, nor defile your ſelves with their idols. 19. I *am* the LORD your God; walk in my ſtatutes, and keep my commandments and do them: 20. And hallow my ſabbaths; and they ſhall be a ſign between me and you, that ye may know that I *am* the LORD your God. 21. Notwithſtanding the children rebelled againſt me: they walked not in my ſtatutes, neither kept my judgments to do them, which *if* a man do, he ſhall even live in them; they polluted my ſabbaths: then I ſaid I would pour out my fury upon them, to accompliſh my anger againſt them in the wilderneſs. 22. Nevertheleſs I withdrew mine hand, and wrought for my names ſake, that it ſhould not be polluted in the ſight of the heathen, in whoſe ſight I brought them forth. 23. I lifted up mine hand unto them alſo in the wilderneſs, that I would ſcatter them among the heathen, and diſperſe them through the countries; 24. Becauſe they had not executed my judgments, but had deſpiſed my ſtatutes, and had polluted my ſabbaths, and their eyes were after their fathers idols. 25. Wherefore I gave them alſo ſtatutes *that were* not good, and judgments whereby they ſhould not live. 26. And I polluted them in their own gifts, in that they cauſed to paſs through *the fire* all that openeth the womb, that I might make them deſolate, to the end, that they might know that I *am* the LORD.

The hiſtory of the ſtruggles between the ſins of Iſrael, by which they endeavoured to ruin themſelves, and the mercies of God, by which he endeavoured to ſave them and make them happy, is here continued: And the inſtances of that ſtruggle in theſe verſes have reference to what paſſed between God and them in the wilderneſs, in which God *honoured himſelf*, and they *ſhamed themſelves*. The ſtory of Iſrael in the wilderneſs is referred to in the New Teſtament, 1 *Cor.* x. and *Heb.* iii. as well as often in the Old, for warning to us Chriſtians; and therefore we are particularly concerned in theſe verſes. Obſerve,

1. The great things God did for them, which he puts them in mind of, not as grudging them his favours, but to ſhew how ungrateful they had been. And we ſay, if you call a man ungrateful you can call him no worſe. It was a great favour, (1.) That God *brought them forth out of Egypt*, ver. 10. Tho' as it follows, he *brought them into the wilderneſs*, and not into Canaan preſently. It is better to be at liberty in a wilderneſs than bond-ſlaves in a land of plenty; to enjoy God and our ſelves in ſolitude, than to loſe both in a crowd; yet there were many of them who had ſuch baſe ſervile ſpirits as not to underſtand this; but when they met with the difficulties of a deſart, wiſhed themſelves in Egypt again. (2.) That he gave them the law upon mount Sinai, *ver.* 11. not only *inſtructed them* concerning good and evil, but by his authority *bound them* from the evil and to the good. He *gave them his ſtatutes*, and a valuable gift it was: *Moſes commanded them a law that was the inheritance of the congregation of Iſrael*, Deut. xxxiii. 4. God *made them to know his judgments*; not only enacted laws for them, but ſhewed them the reaſonableneſs and equity of thoſe laws; with what judgment they were formed. The laws he gave them they were encouraged to obſerve and obey; for *if a man do them he ſhall even live in them*; i. e. In keeping of God's commandments there is abundance of comfort, and a great reward. Chriſt ſaith, *If thou wilt enter into life*, and enjoy it, *keep the commandments*. Tho' they who are moſt ſtrict in their obedience are thus far unprofitable ſervants, that they do no more than is their duty to do, yet it is thus richly recompenſed; *This do, and thou ſhalt live*. The Chaldee ſaith, *He ſhall live an eternal life in them*. St Paul quotes this, *Gal.* iii. 12. to ſhew that *the law is not of faith*, but propoſeth life upon condition of perfect obedience; which we are not capable to perform, and therefore muſt have recourſe to the grace of the goſpel, without which we are all undone. (3.) That he revived the ancient inſtitution of the ſabbath-day, which was loſt and forgotten while they were bond-ſlaves in Egypt: For their task-maſters there would by no means allow them to reſt one day in ſeven. In the wilderneſs indeed every day was a day of reſt; for what need had they to labour who lived upon manna, and whoſe raiment waxed not old; but one day in ſeven muſt be a holy reſt, *ver.* 12. *I gave them my ſabbaths to be a ſign between me and them*. The inſtitution of the ſabbath was a ſign of God's good will to them, and their obſervance of it a ſign of their regard to him; *that they might know that I am the Lord that ſanctify them*. By this God made it to appear he had diſtinguiſhed them from the reſt of the world, and deſigned to model them for a peculiar people to himſelf; and by their attendance on God in ſolemn aſſemblies on ſabbath-days, they were made to increaſe in the knowledge of God, in an experimental knowledge of the powers and pleaſures of his ſanctifying grace. Note, 1. Sabbaths are privileges, and are ſo to be accounted: The church acknowledgeth it as a great favour, in that chapter which is parallel to this, and ſeems to have a reference to this, *Neh.* ix. 14. *Thou madeſt known unto them thy holy ſabbaths*. 2. Sabbaths are ſigns; it is a ſign men have a ſenſe of religion, and there is ſome good correſpondence between them and God, while they make conſcience of keeping holy the ſabbath-day. 3. Sabbaths if duly ſanctified are the means of our ſanctification: If we do the duty of the day, we ſhall find to our comfort, *it is the Lord that ſanctifies us*; makes us *holy*, that is truly *happy* here, and prepares us to be *happy*, that is perfectly *holy* hereafter.

2. Their diſobedient, undutiful carriage towards God, for which he might juſtly have thrown them out of covenant, as ſoon as he had taken them into covenant, *ver.* 13. *they rebelled in the wilderneſs*. There where they received ſo much mercy from God, and had ſuch a dependence upon him, and were in their way to Canaan, yet there they broke out in many open rebellions againſt the God that led them, and fed them. They did not only *not walk in God's ſtatutes*, but they *deſpiſed his judgments* as not worth obſerving; inſtead of *ſanctifying* the ſabbaths they *polluted them*; greatly polluted them, one gathered ſticks, many went out to gather manna, on this day. Hereupon God was ready ſometimes to cut them off; he ſaid more than once he would *conſume them in the wilderneſs*; but Moſes interceded, ſo did God's own mercy more powerfully, and moſt of all a concern for his own glory, that *his name might not be polluted and profaned among the heathen*, ver. 14. that the Egyptians might not ſay, either for miſchief he brought them thus far, or he was not able to bring them any further; or he had no ſuch good land as was talked of to bring them to, *Exod.* xxxii. 12. *Num.* xiv. 13. Note, God's ſtrongeſt reaſons for his ſparing mercy are thoſe which are fetched from his own glory.

3. God's determination to cut off that generation of them in the wilderneſs. He that *lifted up his hand* for them, *ver.* 6. now *lifts up his hand againſt them*; that then by an oath confirmed his promiſe to bring them out of Egypt, now by an oath confirmed

confirmed his threatning that he would not bring them into Canaan, *ver.* 15, 16. *I lifted up my hand unto them*, saying, *As truly as I live, these men which have tempted me these ten times, shall never see the land which I sware unto their fathers*, Num. xvi. 21. Psal. xcv. 11. By their contempt of God's laws, and particularly of his sabbaths, they put a bar in their own door; and that which was at the bottom of their disobedience to God, and their neglect of his institutions, was a secret affection to the gods of Egypt; *their heart went after their idols.* Note, The bias of the mind towards the world and the flesh, the money and the belly, those two great objects of spiritual idolatry, is the root of bitterness, from which springs all disobedience to the divine law: The heart that goes after those idols despiseth God's judgments.

4. The reservation of a seed that should be admitted upon a new trial, and the instructions given to that seed, *ver.* 17. Tho' they thus deserved ruin, and were doomed to it, yet *mine eye spared them.* When he looked upon them he had a compassion for them, and did not *make an end of them*, but reprieved them till a new generation was reared. Note, It is owing purely to the mercy of God that he has not long ago *made an end of us.* This new generation is well educated; Moses in Deuteronomy reported and enforced the laws which had been given to those that came out of Egypt, that their children might have them as it were sounding in their ears afresh, when they entered Canaan. Ver. 18. *I said unto their children in the wilderness*, in the plains of Moab, walk in the statutes of your God, and *walk not in the statutes of your fathers*; do not imitate their superstitious usages, nor retain their foolish wicked customs: Away with their vain conversation, which has nothing else to say for itself, but that it was *received by the tradition of your fathers*, 1 Pet. i. 18. *Defile not yourselves with their idols*, for you see how odious they rendred themselves to God by them. But *keep my judgments*, and *hallow my sabbaths*, ver. 19, 20. Note, If parents be careless, and do not give their children good instructions as they ought, the children ought to make up the want by studying the word of God so much the more carefully and diligently themselves when they grow up. And the bad examples of parents must be made use of by their children for admonition, and not for imitation.

5. The revolt of the next generation from God, by which they also made themselves obnoxious to the wrath of God. *Ver.* 21. *The children rebelled against me* too. And the same that was said of the fathers rebellion is here said *of the childrens*, for they were a seed of evil-doers; Moses told them he *knew their rebellion and their stiff neck*, Deut. xxxi. 27. And *Deut.* ix. 24. *You have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you. They walked not in my statutes*, ver. 21. Nay, *they despised my statutes*, ver. 25. They who *disobey* God's statutes *despise* them, they shew that they have a mean opinion of them, and of him whose statutes they are. They *polluted God's sabbaths*, as their fathers. Note, The profanation of the sabbath-day is an inlet to all impiety; those who pollute holy time will keep nothing pure. It was said of the fathers, *ver.* 16. that *their heart went after their idols*; they worshipped idols because they had an affection for them: It is said of the children, *ver.* 24. that *their eyes went after their fathers idols*; they were grown atheistical, and had no affection for any gods at all, but they worshipped *their fathers idols* because they were *their fathers*, and they had them before *their eyes*; they were used to them: And if they must have gods, they would have such as they could see, such as they could manage. And that which aggravated their disobedience to God's statutes was, that *if they had done them, they might have lived in them*, ver. 21. might have been a happy thriving people. Note, They that go contrary to their duty, go contrary to their interest; they will not obey, will not come to Christ that they may have life, *Joh.* v. 40. And it is therefore just that they who will not live and flourish as they might in their obedience, should die and perish in their disobedience. Now the great instance of that generation's rebellion, and inclination to idolatry, was the *iniquity of Peor*, as that of their fathers was the *golden calf*; then *the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel*, Numb. xxv. 3. Then there was a plague in the congregation of the Lord, which if it had not been seasonably stayed by Phineas's zeal had cut them all off; and yet they owned in Joshua's time, we are not *cleansed from that iniquity unto this day*, Josh. xxii. 17. Psal. cvi. 29. Then it was that God said he would *pour out his fury upon them*, ver. 21. That he *lifted up his hand unto them in the wilderness*, when they were a second time just ready to enter Canaan, *that he would scatter them among the heathen.* This very thing he said to them by Moses in his parting song, *Deut.* xxxii. 20. Because they *provoked him to jealousy with strange gods*, he said, *I will hide my face from them*; and *ver.* 26, 27. he said, *I would scatter them into corners, were it not that I feared the wrath of the enemy*; which explains this here, *ver.* 21, 22. *I said I would pour out my fury upon them*, but *I withdrew* my hand *for my name's sake.* Note, When the corruptions of the visible church are such, and so provoking that we have reason to fear its total extirpation, yet then we may be confident of this to our comfort, that God will secure his own honour, by making good his purpose, that while the world stands he will have a church in it.

6. The judgments of God upon them for their rebellion. They would not regard the *statutes* and *judgments* by which God prescribed them their duty, but *despised* them, and therefore God *gave them statutes and judgments* that *were not good*, and *by which they should not live*, ver. 25. By which seems to be meant the several ways by which God punished them while they were in the wilderness, the plague that broke in upon them, the fiery serpent, and the like; which, in allusion to the law they had broken, are called *judgments*, because inflicted by the justice of God, and *statutes*, because he gave orders concerning them; and *commanded* desolations, as sometimes he had *commanded* deliverances; and *appointed Israel's* plagues as he had done the plagues of Egypt. When God said *I will consume them in a moment*, Num. xvi. 25. when he said take the heads of the people, and hang them up, *Numb.* xxv. 4. when he threatned them with the curse, and obliged them to say *Amen* to every curse, *Deut.* xxvii.—xxviii. Then he gave them judgments by *which they should not live*; more is implied than is expressed, they are judgments by which they should die. Those that will not be bound by the precepts of the law, shall be bound by the sentence of it; for one way or other the word of God will *take hold* of men, *Zech.* i. 6.

Spiritual judgments are the most dreadful; and these God punished them with; the *statutes* and *judgments* which the heathen observed in the worship of their idols were *not good*, and in practising them they *could not live*; and God *gave them* up to those; he made their sin to be their punishment; gave them up to a *reprobate mind*, as he did the Gentile idolaters, *Rom.* i. 24, 26. Gave them up to their own hearts lusts, *Psal.* lxxxi. 12. Punished them for those superstitious customs which were against the written law, by giving them up to those that were against the very light and law of nature: He left them to themselves to be guilty of the most impure idolatries, as in the worship of Baal-peor; he *polluted them*, i. e. he permitted them to pollute themselves *in their own gifts*, ver. 26. And of the most barbarous idolatries, as in the worship of Moloch, when they *caused their children*, especially their first born (which God challenged a particular propriety in, *the first-born of thy sons shalt thou give unto me*) to *pass through the fire*, i. e. to be sacrificed to their idols; that thus he might *make them desolate*, not only that he might justly do it, but that he might do it by their own hands; for this must needs be a great weakning to their families, and a diminution of the honour and strength of their country. Note, God sometimes makes sin to be its own punishment, and yet is not the author of sin; and there needs no more to make men miserable than to give them up to their own vile appetites and passions. Let them be put into the hand of their own counsels, and they will ruin themselves, and *make themselves desolate.* And thus God makes them know that he is the Lord, and that he is a *righteous* God, which they themselves will be compelled to own, when they see how much their wilful transgressions contribute to their own desolations. Note, Those who will not acknowledge God as the Lord their ruler, shall be made to acknowledge him as the Lord their judge, when it is too late.

27 ¶ Therefore son of man, speak unto the house of Israel, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD, Yet in this your fathers have blasphemed me, in that they have committed a trespass against me. 28. *For* when I had brought them into the land, *for* the which I lifted up mine hand to give it to them, then they saw every high hill, and all the thick trees, and they offered there their sacrifices, and there they presented the provocation of their offering: there also they made their sweet savour, and poured out there their drink-offerings. 29. Then I said unto them, What *is* the high place whereunto ye go? and the name thereof is called Bamah unto this day. 30. Wherefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD, Are ye polluted after the manner of your fathers? and commit ye whoredom after their abominations? 31. For when ye offer your gifts, when ye make your sons to pass through the fire, ye pollute your selves with all your idols even unto this day: and shall I be enquired of by you, O house of Israel? *As* I live, saith the Lord GOD, I will not be enquired of by you. 32. And that which cometh into your mind, shall not be at all, that ye say, We will be as the heathen, as the families of the countries, to serve wood and stone.

Here the prophet goes on with the story of their rebellions, for their further humiliation, and shews,

1. That they had persisted in them after they were settled in the land of Canaan. Tho' God had so many times testified his displeasure against their wicked courses, yet *in this*, i. e. in the very same thing, *your fathers have blasphemed me*, i. e. continued to affront me, that they *also have trespassed a trespass against me*, ver. 27. Note, It is a great aggravation of sin when men will not take warning by the mischievous consequences of sin in those that have gone before them: This is *blaspheming God*, it is speaking reproachfully

fully of his judgments, as if they were of no ſignificancy, and were not worth regarding.

(1.) God had made good his promiſe. *I brought them into the land* that I had ſworn to give them. Tho' their unbelief and diſobedience had made the performance ſlow, and much retarded it, yet it did not *make the promiſe of none effect*. They were often very near being cut off in the wilderneſs, but a ſtep between them and ruin, and yet they came to Canaan at laſt. Note, Even God's Iſrael gets to heaven by hell-gates; ſo many are their tranſgreſſions, and ſo ſtrong their corruptions, that it is a miracle of mercy they are happy at laſt; as hypocrites go to hell by heaven-gates. *The righteous ſcarcely are ſaved—Per tot diſcrimina rerum tendimus ad cœlum.*

(2.) They had broken his precept by their abominable idolatries. God had appointed them to deſtroy all the monuments of idolatry, that they might not be tempted to deſert his ſanctuary; but inſtead of defacing them they fell in love with them, and when they *ſaw every high hill*, whence they had the moſt delightful proſpects, and all the *thick trees*, where they had the moſt delightful ſhades, the former to ſhew forth their pompous idolatries, the latter to conceal their ſhameful ones; *there they offered their ſacrifices*, and *made their ſweet ſavour*, which ſhould have been preſented upon God's altar only. *There they preſented the provocation of their offering*, ver. 28. i. e. their offerings, which, inſtead of pacifying God or pleaſing him, were highly provoking; *ſacrifices*, which, tho' coſtly, yet, being *miſplaced*, were an *abomination to the Lord*.

(3.) They obſtinately perſiſted herein, notwithſtanding all the admonitions that were given them, *ver.* 29. *Then I told them* by my ſervants the prophets, told them *where the high place was to which they went*; nay, I put them upon conſidering it, and asking their own conſciences concerning it, by putting this queſtion to them, *Which is the high place whereunto you go?* What do you find there that is ſo inviting, that you will leave God's altars, where he requires your attendance, to frequent ſuch places as he has forbidden to worſhip in? Do you not know that thoſe high places are of a heatheniſh extraction, and that the things which the Gentiles ſacrificed they ſacrificed to devils, and not to God? Did not Moſes tell you ſo? *Deut.* xxxii. 17. *And will you have fellowſhip with devils? What is that high place to which you go*, when you turn your back on God's altars? *O fooliſh Iſraelites, who* or what *has bewitched you?* that you will forſake the fountain of life for broken ciſterns? that worſhip which God appoints and will accept, for that which he forbids, which he abhors, and which he will avenge? And yet *the name is called Bamah unto this day*, i. e. they will have their way, let God and his prophets ſay what they pleaſe to the contrary: They are wedded to their *high places*; even in the beſt reigns thoſe were not taken away; you could not prevail to take away the name of Bamah, *the high place*, out of their mouths, but ſtill they would have that in the place of their worſhip. The ſin and the ſinner are hardly parted.

2. That this generation after they were unſettled continued under the dominion of the ſame corrupt inclinations to idolatry, *ver.* 30. He muſt *ſay to* the preſent *houſe of Iſrael*, ſome of whoſe elders were now ſitting before him, *Are ye polluted after the manner of your fathers?* After all that God hath ſaid againſt you by a ſucceſſion of prophets, and done againſt you by a ſeries of judgments, yet will you take no warning? Will you ſtill be as bad as your fathers were, and *commit* the ſame *abominations* that they committed? I ſee you will; you have a mind to be at the old trade again; you *offer your gifts* in the high places, and you *make your ſons to paſs thro' the fire*, either you actually do it, or do it in purpoſe and imagination, and ſo you continue idolaters *to this day*. Theſe elders ſeem now to have been projecting a coalition with the heathen; their hearts they will reſerve for the God of Iſrael, but their knees they will be at liberty to bow to the gods of the nations among whom they live, that they may have the more reſpect, and the fairer quarter among them. Now the prophet is here ordered to tell thoſe who were forming this ſcheme, and were for confounding the matter between God and Baal, that they ſhould have no comfort or benefit by either. (1.) They ſhould have no benefit by their *conſulting in private* with the prophets of the Lord; for becauſe they were hearkning after idols God would have nothing to do with them. *Ver.* 31. *As I live, ſaith the Lord God, I will not be enquired of by you*, what he had ſaid before, *ver.* 3. having largely ſhewed how juſt it was, he here repeats as that which he would abide by. Let them not think that they honoured him by their enquiries, nor expect an anſwer of peace from him, as long as they continued in love and league with their idols. Note, Thoſe reap no benefit by their religion, that are not entire and ſincere in it; nor can we have any comfortable communion with God in ordinances of worſhip, unleſs we be inward, and upright with him therein. We make nothing of our profeſſion, if it be but a profeſſion. Nay, (2.) They ſhould have no benefit by their *conforming in publick* to the practice of their neighbours. *Ver.* 32. *That which comes into your mind* as a piece of refined politicks in the preſent difficult juncture, and which you would be adviſed to for your own preſervation, and that you may not, by being ſingular, expoſe yourſelves to abuſes, it *ſhall not be at all*, it ſhall turn to no account to you. You ſay, *We will be as the heathen*, we will join with them in worſhipping their gods, tho' at the ſame time we do not believe them to be gods, but *wood and ſtone*, and then we ſhould be taken *as the families of the countries*, they will not know, or in a little while will have forgotten, that we are Jews, and will allow us the ſame privileges with their own countrymen. Tell them, ſaith God, that this project ſhall *never proſper*. Either their neighbours will not admit them to join with them in their worſhip, or if they do will think never the better but the worſe of them for it, and will look upon them as diſſemblers, and not fit to be truſted, who are thus falſe to their God, and put a cheat upon their neighbours. Note, There is nothing got by ſinful compliances; and the carnal projects of hypocrites will ſtand them in no ſtead. It is only integrity and uprightneſs that will preſerve men, and recommend them to God and man.

33. ¶ *As* I live, ſaith the Lord GOD, ſurely with a mighty hand, and with a ſtretched out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you. 34. And I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are ſcattered, with a mighty hand, and with a ſtretched out arm, and with fury poured out. 35. And I will bring you into the wilderneſs of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face. 36. Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderneſs of the land of Egypt, ſo will I plead with you, ſaith the Lord GOD. 37. And I will cauſe you to paſs under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant. 38. And I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that tranſgreſs againſt me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they ſojourn, and they ſhall not enter into the land of Iſrael, and ye ſhall know that I *am* the LORD. 39. As for you, O houſe of Iſrael, thus ſaith the Lord GOD, Go ye, ſerve ye every one his idols, and hereafter *alſo*, if ye will not hearken unto me: but pollute ye my holy name no more with your gifts, and with your idols. 40. For in mine holy mountain, in the mountain of the height of Iſrael, ſaith the Lord GOD, there ſhall all the houſe of Iſrael, all of them in the land ſerve me: there will I accept them, and there will I require your offerings, and the firſt-fruits of your oblations, with all your holy things. 41. I will accept you with your ſweet ſavour, when I bring you out from the people, and gather you out of the countries wherein ye have been ſcattered, and I will be ſanctified in you before the heathen. 42. And ye ſhall know that I *am* the LORD, when I ſhall bring you into the land of Iſrael, into the country *for* the which I lifted up mine hand to give it to your fathers. 43. And there ſhall ye remember your ways, and all your doings wherein ye have been defiled, and ye ſhall lothe your ſelves in your own ſight, for all your evils that ye have committed. 44. And ye ſhall know that I *am* the LORD, when I have wrought with you for my names ſake, not according to your wicked ways, nor according to your corrupt doings, O ye houſe of Iſrael, ſaith the Lord GOD.

The deſign which was now on foot among the elders of Iſrael was, that the people of Iſrael being ſcattered among the nations ſhould *lay aſide* all their peculiarities, and *conform* to thoſe among whom they lived; but God had told them the deſign ſhould not take effect, *ver.* 32. Now in theſe verſes he ſhews particularly how it ſhould be fruſtrated. They aimed at the *mingling* of the families of *Iſrael with the families of the countries*: But it will prove in the iſſue,

1. That the wicked Iſraelites, notwithſtanding their compliances, ſhall not mingle with them in their proſperity, but ſhall be diſtinguiſhed from them for deſtruction: for idolatrous Iſraelites, that are apoſtates from God, ſhall be ſooner and ſorer puniſhed than idolatrous Babylonians that never knew the way of righteouſneſs. Read and tremble at the doom here paſſed upon them; it is backed with an oath, not to be reverſed, *As I live, ſaith the Lord God*, thus and thus will I deal with you. They think to make both Jeruſalem and Babylon their friends by halting between two. But God threatens that neither of them ſhall ſerve for a reſt or refuge for them.

1. Babylon ſhall not protect them, nor any of the countries of the heathen; for God will caſt them out of his protection, and then what prince, what people, what place, can ſerve to be a ſanctuary to them? God was Iſrael's king of old, and had they continued his loyal ſubjects he would have *ruled over them* with care and tenderneſs for their good, but now *with a ſtretched*

out arm, and with fury poured out will I rule over them, ver. 33. That power which ſhould have been exerted for their protection, ſhall be exerted for their deſtruction. Note, There is no ſhaking off God's dominion, rule he will either with the golden ſceptre or with the iron rod; and they that will not yield to the power of his grace, ſhall be made to ſink under the power of his wrath. Now when God is angry with them, tho' they may think they ſhall be loſt in the croud of the heathen among whom they are ſcattered, they will be diſappointed; for, *ver.* 34. *I will gather you out of the countries wherein you are ſcattered*; as when the rebels are diſperſed in battle, thoſe that have eſcaped the *ſword of war* are purſued and brought together out of all the places, whither they were ſcattered, to be puniſhed by the *ſword of juſtice*. They ſhall be brought *into the wilderneſs of the people*, ver. 35. either into Babylon, which is called a *wilderneſs*, chap. xix. 13. and the *deſert of the ſea*, Iſa. xxi. 1. or into ſome place, which, tho' full of people, ſhall be to them, as the wilderneſs was to Iſrael, after they came out of Egypt, a place where God will *plead with them face to face*, as he *pleaded with their fathers in the wilderneſs of Egypt*, ver. 36. where their carcaſes ſhall fall, and where he will ſwear concerning them, that they ſhall never return to Canaan, as he ſware concerning their fathers, that they ſhould never come into Canaan; where he will avenge the breach of his law, with as much terror as he gave it in the wilderneſs of Sinai. Note, God has a good action againſt apoſtates, and will not only find time, but find a proper place too to plead with them in upon that action, a *wilderneſs* even in the midſt of the people for that purpoſe.

2. Iſrael ſhall be no more able to protect them than Babylon could; nor ſhall their relation to God's people ſtand them in any more ſtead for the other world, than their compliance with idolaters ſhall for this world; nor ſhall they ſtand *in the congregation of the righteous*, any more than in the congregation of evil-doers; for there will come a *diſtinguiſhing day*, when God will ſeparate between the precious and the vile: he will *cauſe them*, as the ſhepherd cauſeth his ſheep, to *paſs under the rod*, when he tithes them, *Lev.* xxvii. 32. that he may mark which is for God. God will take particular notice of each of them, one by one, as ſheep are counted, and *he will bring them into the bond of the covenant*, ver. 37. *i. e.* he will try them, and judge of them according to the tenor of the covenant, and the difference made between ſome and others by the bleſſings and curſes of the covenant. Or, it may refer to thoſe among them that repented and reformed, he will cauſe them to paſs under the rod of affliction, and having done them good by it, he will bring them again *into the bond of the covenant*, will be to them a God in covenant, and uſe them again as *heirs of promiſe*.

1. He will ſeparate the wicked from among them; *ver.* 38. *I will purge out from among you the rebels*, that have been a grief and ſcandal to you, and who have by their rebellions brought all theſe calamities upon you: the judgments of God ſhall find them out, and their naming the name of Iſrael ſhall be no ſhelter to them. They ſhall be *brought out of the countries where they ſojourn*, and ſhall not have that reſt in them which they promiſed themſelves. But they *ſhall not enter into the land of Iſrael*, nor enjoy the benefit of that reſt which God has promiſed to his people. Note, Tho' godly people may ſhare with wicked in the calamities of the world, yet wicked people ſhall have no ſhare with the godly in the heavenly Canaan: but it ſhall be part of the bleſſedneſs of that world, that they ſhall be *purged out from among them*, the tares from the wheat, the chaff from the corn, *chap.* xiii. 9. But wherever theſe idolaters of *the houſe of Iſrael* were contriving to worſhip both God and their idols, thinking to pleaſe both, God here proteſts againſt it, *ver.* 39. as Elijah had done in his name, *If the Lord be God then follow him, but if Baal then follow him*; if you will ſerve your idols do, and take what comes of it, but then do not pretend relation to God and a religious obſervance of him, nor *pollute his holy name with your gifts* at his altar. Spiritual judgments are the ſoreſt judgments: two of that kind of judgments are threatned in this verſe againſt thoſe that were for dividing between the God of Iſrael, and the gods of the nations. (1.) That they ſhould be *given up* to the *ſervice of their idols*: to them he ſaith ironically, *Since you will not hearken unto me, Go ye, ſerve every one his idols*, now you think it will be for your intereſt, *and hereafter alſo*. You ſhall go on in it, *Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone*, let him take his courſe, and ſee what he will get by it at laſt. Note, They who think to *ſerve themſelves by ſin*, will find in the end, that they have but *enſlaved themſelves to ſin*. (2.) That they ſhould be cut off from the ſervice of God, and communion with God; you *ſhall not pollute my holy name* with your *vain oblations*, Iſa. i. 11. You bring *your gifts* in your hands, wherewith you pretend to honour me, but at the ſame time you bring *your idols* in your hearts, and therefore you do but *pollute* me; which I will not ſuffer any more, *Amos* v. 21, 22. Note, Thoſe are juſtly forbidden God's houſe, that profane his houſe.

2. He will ſeparate them to himſelf again. (1.) He will *gather them* in mercy *out of the countries whither they were ſcattered*, to be monuments of mercy, as the incorrigible were gathered to be veſſels of wrath, *ver.* 41. Not one of God's jewels ſhall be loſt in the lumber of this world. (2.) He will *bring them to the land of Iſrael*, which he had promiſed to *give to their fathers*: and the diſcontinuance of their poſſeſſion ſhall be no defeaſance of their right; it is the *land of Iſrael* ſtill, and thither God will bring them ſafe again, *ver.* 42. (3.) He will re-eſtabliſh his ordinances among them, will ſet up his ſanctuary in his *holy mountain*, which is here called *the mountain of the height of Iſrael*, for the mount Zion was none of the higheſt mountains, yet the temple there was one of the *higheſt honours of Iſrael*. It is promiſed, that they who preſerved their integrity, and would not ſerve idols in other lands, ſhall return to their proſperity, and ſhall ſerve the true God in their own land. *All of them in the land ſhall ſerve me*. Note, It is the true happineſs of a people, and a ſure token for good to them, when there is a prevailing diſpoſition in them to ſerve God. Whereas God had forbidden the idolaters to bring their gifts to his altar, of theſe he will *require offerings and firſt-fruits*, and will accept them, *ver.* 40. What he doth not *require* he will not *accept*, but what is done with a regard to his precepts, he will be well-pleaſed with. He will *accept them with their ſweet ſavour*, or *ſavour of reſt*, ver. 41. as being very grateful to him, and what he takes a complacency in; whereas to hypocritical worſhippers, he ſaith, *I will not ſmell in your ſolemn aſſemblies*. (4.) He will give them true repentance for their ſins, *ver.* 43. When they find how gracious God is to them, they will be overcome with his kindneſs, and bluſh to think of their *ill carriage* towards ſo *good a God*. There, in *my holy mountain*, when you come to enjoy the privileges of that again, *there* ſhall ye *remember your doings*, wherein ye have been defiled. Note, The more converſant we are with God's holineſs, the more we ſhall ſee of the odious nature of ſin. There *ye ſhall lothe your ſelves in your own ſight*. Note, Ingenuous evangelical repentance makes people lothe themſelves for their ſins, as *Job* xlii. 5, 6. (5.) He will give them the knowledge of himſelf: *They ſhall know* by experience, that *he is the Lord*; that he is a God of almighty power, and inexhauſtible goodneſs; kind to his people, and faithful to his covenant with them. Note, All the favours we receive from God ſhould lead us into a more intimate acquaintance with him. (6.) He will do all this for his own name's ſake, notwithſtanding their undeſervings, and ill-deſervings, *ver.* 44. He has *wrought with them, i. e.* wrought for them, wrought in favour of them, wrought in concurrence with them, they doing their endeavour, he has wrought with them purely *for his name's ſake*. His reaſons were all fetched from himſelf: had he dealt with them *according to their wicked ways and their corrupt doings*, tho' they were the better and ſounder part of the houſe of Iſrael, he had left them to be ſcattered and loſt with the reſt; but he recovered and reſtored them for the ſake of his own name, not only that it might not be *polluted*, ver. 14. but that he might be *ſanctified in them before the heathen*, ver. 41. that he might *ſanctify himſelf*, ſo the word is; for it is God's work to glorify his own name. He will do well for his people, that he may have the glory of it; that he may manifeſt himſelf to be a God pardoning ſin, and ſo keeping promiſe; that this people may praiſe him, and that their neighbours may likewiſe take notice of him, as they did when God *turned again their captivity*, Pſal. cxxvi. 3. *Then ſaid they among the heathen, The Lord has done great things for them.*

45. ¶ Moreover, the word of the LORD came unto me, ſaying, 46. Son of man, ſet thy face toward the ſouth, and drop *thy word* toward the ſouth, and propheſy againſt the foreſt of the ſouth-field; 47. And ſay to the foreſt of the ſouth, Hear the word of the LORD, Thus ſaith the Lord GOD, Behold, I will kindle a fire in thee, and it ſhall devour every green tree in thee, and every dry tree: the flaming flame ſhall not be quenched, and all faces from the ſouth to the north ſhall be burnt therein. 48. And all fleſh ſhall ſee that I the LORD have kindled it: it ſhall not be quenched. 49. Then ſaid I, Ah Lord GOD, they ſay of me, Doth he not ſpeak parables?

We have here a prophecy of wrath againſt Judah and Jeruſalem, which ſhould more fitly have begun the next chapter, than have concluded this; for it has no dependence on what goes before, but that which follows in the beginning of the next chapter is the reddition or explication of it, when the people complained, that this was a parable which they underſtood not. In this parable,

1. It is a *foreſt* that is *propheſied againſt, the foreſt of the ſouth-field*, i. e. Judah and Jeruſalem. Theſe lay ſouth from Babylon, where Ezekiel now was, and therefore he is directed to *ſet his face towards the ſouth*, ver. 46. to intimate to them, that God had ſet his face againſt them, was diſpleaſed with them, and determined to deſtroy them. But tho' it be a meſſage of wrath he has to deliver, he muſt deliver it with mildneſs and tenderneſs,

tenderneſs, he muſt *drop his word toward the ſouth*; his doctrine muſt *diſtil as the rain*, Deut. xxxii. 2. that peoples hearts might be ſoftened by it, as the earth by the *river of God*, which *drops upon the paſtures of the wilderneſs*, Pſal. lxv. 12. and which a *ſouth-land* more eſpecially calls for, *Joſh.* xv. 19. Judah and Jeruſalem are called foreſts, not only becauſe they had been full of people, as a wood of trees, but becauſe they had been empty of fruit, for fruit-trees grow not in a foreſt; and a *foreſt* is put in oppoſition to a *fruitful field*, Iſa. xxxii 15. They that ſhould have been as the garden of the Lord, and his vineyard, were become like a foreſt, all overgrown with *briers and thorns*: and thoſe that are ſo, that bring not forth the fruits of righteouſneſs, God's word propheſies againſt.

2. It is a fire kindled in his foreſt, that is propheſied of, *ver.* 47. All thoſe judgments, which waſted and conſumed both the city and the country, ſword, famine, peſtilence, and captivity, are ſignified by this *fire*. (1.) It is a fire of God's own kindling; *I will kindle a fire in thee*; the *breath of the Lord* is not as a drop, but *as a ſtream of brimſtone* to ſet it on fire, *Iſa.* xxx. 33. He that had been himſelf a protecting fire about Jeruſalem, is now a conſuming fire in it. *All fleſh ſhall ſee* by the fury of this fire, and the deſolations it ſhall make, eſpecially when they compare it with the ſins which had made them fuel for this fire, that it is *the Lord* that *has kindled it*, ver. 48. as a juſt avenger of his own injured honour. (2.) This conflagration ſhall be general: all orders and degrees of men ſhall be devoured by it; young and old, rich and poor, high and low; even *green trees*, which the fire doth not eaſily faſten upon, ſhall be devoured by this fire; even good people ſhall ſome of them be involved in theſe calamities: and *if this be done in the green tree, what ſhall be done in the dry?* The *dry trees* ſhall be as tinder and touch-wood to this fire. *All faces, i. e.* all that covers the face of the earth *from the ſouth* of Canaan to the north, from Beerſheba to Dan ſhall be *burnt therein*. (3.) The fire *ſhall not be quenched*, no attempts to give check to the diſſolution ſhall prevail. When God will ruin a nation, who or what can ſave it?

Now obſerve, 1. The peoples reflexion upon the prophet on occaſion of this diſcourſe. They ſaid, *Doth he not ſpeak parables?* Which was the language either of their ignorance or infidelity, the plaineſt truths were as parables to them; or of their malice and ill will to the prophet. Note, It is common for thoſe, who will not be wrought upon by the word, to pick quarrels with it; it is either too plain, or too obſcure; too fine, or too homely; too common, or too ſingular; ſomething or other is amiſs in it. (2.) The prophet's complaint of God. *Ah, Lord God, they ſay* ſo and ſo of me. Note, It is a comfort to us, when people ſpeak ill of us unjuſtly, that we have a God to complain to.

CHAP. XXI.

In this chapter we have, 1. *An explication of the prophecy in the cloſe of the foregoing chapter concerning the fire in the foreſt, which the people complained they could not underſtand,* ver. 1—5. *with directions to the prophet to ſhew himſelf deeply affected with it,* ver. 6, 7. (2.) *A further prediction of the ſword that was coming upon the land, by which all ſhould be laid waſte; and this expreſſed very emphatically,* ver. 8—17. (3.) *A proſpect given of the king of Babylon's approach in Jeruſalem, to which he was determined by divination,* ver. 18—24. (4.) *Sentence paſſed upon Zedekiah king of Judah,* ver. 25—27. (5.) *The deſtruction of the Ammonites by the ſword foretold,* ver. 28—32. *Thus is this chapter all threatning.*

1. AND the word of the LORD came unto me, ſaying, 2. Son of man, ſet thy face toward Jeruſalem, and drop *thy word* toward the holy places, and propheſy againſt the land of Iſrael, 3. And ſay to the land of Iſrael, Thus ſaith the LORD, Behold, I *am* againſt thee, and will draw forth my ſword out of his ſheath, and will cut off from thee the righteous and the wicked. 4. Seeing then that I will cut off from thee the righteous and the wicked, therefore ſhall my ſword go forth out of his ſheath againſt all fleſh from the ſouth to the north: 5. That all fleſh may know that I the LORD have drawn forth my ſword out of his ſheath: it ſhall not return any more. 6. Sigh therefore, thou ſon of man, with the breaking of *thy* loyns; and with bitterneſs ſigh before their eyes. 7. And it ſhall be when they ſay unto thee, Wherefore ſigheſt thou? that thou ſhalt anſwer, For the tidings, becauſe it cometh: and every heart ſhall melt, and all hands ſhall be feeble, and every ſpirit ſhall faint, and all knees ſhall be weak *as* water: behold, it cometh, and ſhall be brought to paſs, ſaith the Lord GOD.

The prophet had faithfully delivered the meſſage he was intruſted with in the cloſe of the foregoing chapter, in the terms wherein he received it, not daring to add his own comment upon it: but when he complained, that the people found fault with him for *ſpeaking parables*, the word of the Lord came to him again, and gave him a key to that figurative diſcourſe, that with it he might let the people into the meaning of it, and ſo ſilence that objection. For all men ſhall be rendred inexcuſable at God's bar, and every mouth ſhall be ſtopped. Note, He that *ſpeaks with tongues* ſhould *pray that he may interpret*, 1 Cor. xiv. 13. When we ſpeak to people about their ſouls, we ſhould ſtudy plainneſs, and expreſs our ſelves as we may be beſt underſtood. Chriſt *expounded his parables to his diſciples*, Mark iv. 34.

1. The prophet is here more plainly directed *againſt whom* to level the arrow of this prophecy. He muſt *drop his word toward the holy places*, ver. 2. towards Canaan the holy land, Jeruſalem the holy city, the temple the holy houſe. Theſe were highly dignified above other places, but when they *polluted* them, that word which uſed to drop in the holy places ſhall now drop *againſt them*. *Propheſy againſt the land of Iſrael.* It was the honour of Iſrael that it had prophets and prophecy, but theſe being deſpiſed by them are turned againſt them. And juſtly is Zion battered with her own artillery, which uſed to be employed againſt her adverſaries, ſeeing ſhe knew not how to value it.

2. He is inſtructed, and is to inſtruct the people in the meaning of *the fire* that was threatned, to conſume the *foreſt of the ſouth*: it ſignified a *ſword drawn*, the ſword of war which ſhould make the land deſolate; *ver.* 3. *Behold, I am againſt thee, O land of Iſrael.* There needs no more to make a people miſerable than to have God *againſt them*; for as if he be *for us* we need not fear whoever are *againſt us*, ſo if he be *againſt us* we cannot hope whoever are *for us*. And God's profeſſing people, when they revolt from him, ſet him againſt them, who uſed to be for them. Was *the fire* there of *God's kindling?* The ſword here is *his ſword*, which he hath prepared, and which he will give commiſſion to; it is he that will *draw it out of its ſheath*, where it had lain quiet, and threatned no harm. Note, When the ſword is unſheathed among the nations, God's hand muſt be eyed and owned in it. Did the fire devour *every green tree*, and *every dry tree*? The ſword in like manner ſhall *cut off the righteous and the wicked*; good and bad were involved in the common calamities of the nation: the righteous were *cut off from the land of Iſrael*, when they were ſent *captives* in Babylon, tho' perhaps few or none of them were cut off from the land of the living; and it was a threatning omen to the land of Iſrael, that in the beginning of its troubles ſuch excellent men as Daniel and his fellows, and Ezekiel, were cut off from it, and conveyed to Babylon. But tho' the ſword *cut off the righteous and the wicked*, for it *devours one as well as another*, 1 Sam. xi. 25. yet far be it from us to think that *the righteous are as the wicked*, Gen. xviii. 25. No, God's graces and comforts make a *great* difference when his providence ſeems to make none. The *good figs* are ſent into Babylon *for their good*, Jer. xxiv. 5, 6. It is only in outward appearance that there is *one event to the righteous and to the wicked*, Eccl. ix. 2. But it ſpeaks the greatneſs of God's diſpleaſure againſt the land of Iſrael: well might it be ſaid, *his eye ſhall not ſpare*, when it ſhall not ſpare, no not the *righteous* in it. Since there are not righteous men enow to ſave the land, to make the juſtice of God the more illuſtrious, the few that are ſhall ſuffer with it, and God's mercy ſhall make it up to them ſome other way. Did the fire *burn up all faces from the ſouth to the north?* The ſword ſhall go *forth againſt all fleſh from the ſouth to the north*; ſhall go forth as God's ſword with a commiſſion that cannot be conteſted, with a force that cannot be reſiſted. Were all fleſh made to know that God kindled the fire, they ſhall be made to know that he hath *drawn forth the ſword*, ver. 5. And, laſtly, ſhall the fire that is *kindled never be quenched?* So when this ſword of the Lord is drawn againſt Judah and Jeruſalem, the ſcabbard is thrown away, and it ſhall never be ſheathed; it *ſhall not return any more*, till it has made a full end.

3. The prophet is ordered by expreſſions of his own grief and concern for theſe calamities that were coming on, to try to make impreſſions of the like upon the people. When he has delivered his meſſage he muſt *ſigh*, ver. 6. muſt fetch many deep ſighs, *with the breaking of his loins*; he muſt ſigh as if his heart would burſt, *ſigh with bitterneſs*, with other expreſſions of bitter ſorrow, and this publickly *in the ſight* of thoſe to whom he delivered the foregoing meſſage, that this might be a ſermon *to their eyes*, as that was to their ears, and it was well if both would work upon them. The prophet muſt *ſigh*, tho' it was painful to himſelf, and made his breaſt ſore; and tho' it is probable the profane among the people would ridicule him for it, and call him a whining canting preacher. But *if we be beſide curſelves, it is to God*, and if *this be to be vile we will be yet more ſo.* Note, Miniſters, if they would affect others with the things they ſpeak of, muſt ſhew that they are themſelves in the greateſt ſincerity affected with them; and muſt ſubmit to that which may create uneaſineſs to themſelves, ſo that it will promote the ends of their miniſtry. The people obſerving the prophet to ſigh ſo much, and ſeeing no viſible occaſion for it, would ask, *Wherefore ſigheſt thou?* Theſe ſighs have ſome myſtical meaning, let us know what it is; and he muſt

must answer them, *ver.* 7. it is *for the tidings*, the heavy tidings that we shall hear shortly; the *tidings come*, the judgments come which we hear the tidings of, *it cometh* apace; and then you will all *sigh*; nay, that will not serve, *every heart shall melt*, and *every spirit fail*; your courage will all be gone, and you will have no encouraging considerations to support yourselves with: and when *heart* and *spirit* fail, it will follow of course, that *all hands will be feeble* and unable to fight, and all *knees will* be *weak as water*, and unable to flee, or to stand their ground. Those who have God *for them*, when flesh and heart fail, have him to be *the strength of their heart*; but those who have God against them, have no cordial for a fainting spirit, but are as Belshazzer when *his thoughts troubled him*, Dan. v. 6. But some people are worse *frightned* than *hurt*; may not the case be so here, and the event prove better than likely? No, *behold, it cometh*, and *shall be brought to pass*. It is not a bug-bear that they are frightned with, but *according to the fear so is the wrath*, and more grievous than is feared.

8. ¶ Again, the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 9. Son of man, prophesy and say, Thus saith the LORD, Say, A sword, a sword is sharpened, and also furbished. 10. It is sharpened to make a sore slaughter, it is furbished that it may glitter: should we then make mirth? it contemneth the rod of my son, *as* every tree. 11. And he hath given it to be furbished, that it may be handled: the sword is sharpened, and it is furbished to give into the hand of the slayer. 12. Cry and howl, son of man, for it shall be upon my people, it *shall be* upon all the princes of Israel: terrors, by reason of the sword shall be upon my people: smite therefore upon *thy* thigh. 13. Because *it is* a trial, and what if *the sword* contemn even the rod? it shall be no *more*, saith the Lord GOD. 14. Thou therefore, son of man, prophesy, and smite *thine* hands together, and let the sword be doubled the third time, the sword of the slain, it *is* the sword of the great *men that are* slain, which entreth into their privy chambers. 15. I have set the point of the sword against all their gates, that *their* heart may faint, and *their* ruins be multiplied: ah, *it is* made bright, *it is* wrapt up for the slaughter. 16. Go thee one way or other, *either* on the right hand or on the left, whithersoever thy face *is* set. 17. I will also smite mine hands together, and I will cause my fury to rest: I the LORD have said *it*.

Here is another prophecy of *the sword*, which is delivered in a very affecting manner; the expressions here used are somewhat intricate, and perplex interpreters. The sword was unsheathed in the foregoing verses, here it is fitted up to do execution, which the prophet is commanded to lament.

Observe, 1. How the *sword* is here *described*. (1.) It is *sharpened* that it may cut and wound, and make *a sore slaughter*. The wrath of God will put an edge upon it; and whatever instruments God shall please to make use of in executing his judgments, he will fill them with strength, courage, and fury, according to the service they are employed in. Out of the mouth of Christ goes a *sharp sword*, Rev. xix. 15. (2.) It is *furbished* that *it may glitter*, to the terror of those against whom it is drawn. It shall be a kind of *flaming sword*. If it have rusted in the scabbard for want of use, it shall be rubbed and brightned; for though the glory of God's justice may seem to have been eclipsed for a while, during the day of his patience, and the delay of his judgments, yet it will shine out again, and be made to glitter. (3.) It is a victorious sword, nothing shall stand before it, *ver.* 10. *it contemneth the rod of my son, as every tree*. *Israel*, said God once, *is my son, my first-born*. The government of that people was called a *rod*, a *strong rod*; we read *chap.* xix. 11. of the *strong rods* they had *for sceptres*; but when the sword of God's justice is drawn it *contemns this rod*, makes nothing of it, though it be a *strong rod*, and the *rod of his son*; it is no more than *any other tree*. When God's professing people are revolted from him, and in rebellion against him, his sword *despiseth* them. What are they to him more than another people? The marginal reading gives another notion of this sword; *It is the rod of my son*; and we know of whom God hath said, *Psal.* ii. 7. *Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee*, and *ver.* 9. *Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron*: this sword is *that rod of iron*, which *contemns every tree*, and will bear it down. Or, this sword is *the rod of my son*, a correcting rod, for the chastening of the transgression of God's people, 2 *Sam.* vii. 14. not to cut them off from being a people. It is a sword to others, a *rod* to *my son*.

2. How the sword is here put into the hand of the executioners. It is *the rod of my son*, and he has *given it that it may be handled*, ver. 11. that it may be made use of, for the end for which it was drawn. *It is given into the hand* not of the fencer, to be played with, but *of the slayer*, to do execution with. The sword of war my son makes use of as a sword of justice, and to him *all judgment is committed*. It is *made bright*, ver. 15. *it is wrapped up*, that it may be kept safe, and clean, and sharp *for the slaughter*, not as Goliah's sword was wrapped *up in a cloth*, only for a memorial, 1 *Sam.* xxi. 9.

3. How the sword is *directed*, and against whom it is sent, *ver.* 12. *It shall be upon my people*; they shall fall by this sword; it is repeated again, as that which is scarce credible, that *the sword* of the heathen shall be upon God's own people. Nay, it shall be *upon all the princes of Israel*; their dignity and power as *princes* shall be no more their security, than their profession of religion as princes of Israel. But if the sword be at any time upon God's people, have they not comfort within sufficient to arm them against every thing in it that is frightful? Yes, they have while they carry themselves as becomes his people: but these had not done so, and therefore *terrors by reason of the sword* shall be upon those that call themselves *my people*. Note, While good men are quiet, not only *from evil* but *from the fear* of it, wicked men are disturbed not only with *the* sword but with *the terrors of it*, arising from a conscience of their own guilt. This sword is directed particularly *against the great men*, for they had been the greatest sinners among them; they had *altogether broken the yoke and burst the bonds*, Jer. v. 5. and therefore with them in a special manner God's controversy is who had been the ring-leaders in sin. The *sword of the slain* is *the sword of the great men that are slain*, ver. 14. Tho' they have furnished themselves with places of retirement, places of concealment, where they flatter themselves with hopes that they shall be safe, they will find that the sword will *enter into their privy chambers*, and find them out there, as the *frogs* when they were one of Egypt's plagues found admission into the *chambers of their kings*. The sword, the *point of this sword*, is directed *against their gates*, against *all their gates*, ver. 15. against all those things with which they thought to keep it out, and fortify themselves against it. Note, The strongest gates, tho' they be *gates of brass*, never so well barred, never so well guarded, are no fence against the point of the sword of God's judgments. But when that is *pointed* against sinners, (1.) They are ready to fear the worst; *their hearts faint*, so that they are not able to make any resistance. (2.) The worst comes, whatever resistance they make it is to no purpose, but they are ruined, and *their ruins are multiplied*. But what need we observe the particular directions of this sword, when it has a general commission, is sent with a running warrant? *ver.* 16. *Go thee, one way or other*, which way thou wilt, turn *to the right hand, or to the left*, thou wilt find those that are obnoxious, for there are none free from guilt; and thou hast authority against them, for there are none exempt from punishment; and therefore *whithersoever thy face is set*, that way do thou proceed, and, like Jonathan's sword, *from the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, thou shalt never return empty*, 2 Sam. i. 22. Note, So full is the world of wicked people, that which way soever God's judgments go forth they will find work, will find matter to work upon. That fire will never go out on this earth for want of fuel. And such various methods God has of *meeting with* sinners, that the sword of his justice is still as it was at first when it flamed in the hand of the cherubims, it *turneth every way*, Gen. iii. 24.

4. What is the nature of this sword, and what the intentions and limitations of it as to the people of God, *ver.* 13. It is a correction; it is designed to be so; the sword to others is a rod to them. This is a comfortable word which comes in the midst of these terrible ones, tho' it be expressed somewhat obscurely. (1.) The people of God begin to be afraid, that *the sword will contemn even the rod*; that the sword will go on with such fury that it will *despise* its commission to be *a rod* only, will forget its bounds, and become *a sword* indeed even to God's own people. They fear lest the Chaldeans sword, which is the rod of God's anger, *contemn* its being called *a rod*, and become as the *ax* that *boasts it self against him that heweth therewith*; or, *the staff that lifts up it self as if it were no wood*, Isa. x. 15. Or, *what if the sword contemn even the rod?* i. e. what if this sword make the former rods, as that of Sennacherib, to be contemned as nothing to this? What if this should prove not a correcting rod, but a destroying sword, to make a full end of our church and nation? This is that which the *thinking*, but *timorous* few are apprehensive of. Note, When threatning judgments are abroad, it is good to suppose the worst that may be the consequences of them, that we may provide accordingly. *What if the sword contemn the tribe or sceptre?* viz. that of Judah, and the house of David, so some think Shebet here signifies: what if it should aim at the ruin of our government? If it do, *the Lord is righteous*, and *will be gracious* notwithstanding. But, (2.) These fears are silenced with an assurance that it is not so; the sword shall not forget it self, nor the errand on which it is sent: *It is a trial*, and it is *no more than a trial*. He that sends it makes what use of it, and sets what bounds to it he pleaseth. Here shall its proud waves be stayed. Note, It is matter of comfort to the people of God when his judgments are abroad, and they are ready to tremble for fear of them, that whatever they are to others, to them they are but *trials*; and *when they are tried they shall come forth as gold*, and the *proving* of their faith shall be the *improving* of it.

5. How

5. Here the prophet and the people muſt ſhew themſelves affected with theſe judgments threatned.

1. The prophet muſt be very ſerious in denouncing theſe judgments. He muſt ſay, *a ſword, a ſword*, ver. 9. Let him not ſtudy for fine words, and a variety of quaint expreſſions; when the town is on fire people do not ſo give notice of it, but cry with a frightful doleful voice, *fire, fire*. So muſt the prophet cry, *a ſword, a ſword*; and, *ver.* 14. *Let the ſword be doubled* the *third time* in thy preaching. God ſpeaketh once, yea twice, yea thrice; it were well if men after all would perceive and regard it: it ſhall be *doubled the third time* in God's providence; for it was Nebuchadnezzar's third deſcent upon Jeruſalem that *made a full end* of it. Ruin comes gradually but at laſt comes *effectually* upon a provoking people. Yet this is not all, the prophet is not only as a herald at arms to proclaim war, and to cry, *a ſword, a ſword*, once and again, and a third time, but as a perſon nearly concerned he muſt *cry and howl*, ver. 12. muſt ſadly lament the deſolations that the ſword would make, as one that did himſelf not only ſympathize with the ſufferers but feel from the ſufferings. Again, *ver.* 14. *Propheſy and ſmite thy hands together*, wring *thy hands*, as lamenting the deſolation; or, clap *thy hands*, as by thy prophecy inſtigating and encouraging thoſe that were to be the inſtruments of it; or as one ſtanding amazed at the ſuddenneſs and ſeverity of the judgment. The prophet muſt *ſmite his hands together*; for (ſaith God) *I will alſo ſmite mine hands together*, ver. 17. God is in earneſt in pronouncing this ſentence upon them, and therefore the prophet muſt ſhew himſelf in earneſt in publiſhing it. God's *ſmiting his hands together*, as well as the prophets, is in token of a holy indignation at their wickedneſs, which was really very aſtoniſhing. When Balak's anger was kindled againſt Balaam he *ſmote his hands together*, Numb. xxiv. 10. Note, God and his miniſters are juſtly *angry* at thoſe who *might be ſaved*, and yet *will be ruined*. Some make it an expreſſion of triumph and exultation, agreeing with that, *Iſa.* i. 24. *Ah, I will eaſe me of mine adverſaries*; and that, *Prov.* i. 26. *I alſo will laugh at their calamity*. And ſo it follows here, *I will cauſe my fury to reſt*, not only it ſhall be *perfected*, but ſhall be *pleaſed*. And obſerve with what ſolemnity, with what authority this ſentence is ratified, *I the Lord have ſaid it*, who can and will make good what I have ſaid. *I have ſaid it* and will never unſay it. *I have ſaid it*, and who can gainſay it?

2. The people muſt be very ſerious in the proſpect of theſe judgments. An intimation of this comes in in a parentheſis, *ver.* 10. *Should we then make mirth?* ſeeing God hath drawn the ſword, and the prophet ſighs and cries, *ſhould we then make mirth?* The prophet ſeems to give this as a reaſon why he ſighs, as *Nehemiah* ii. 3. *Why ſhould not my countenance be ſad*, when Jeruſalem lies waſte? Note, Before we allow our ſelves to be merry, we ought to conſider whether we ſhould be merry or no. Should we make mirth, we that are ſentenced to the ſword, that lie under the wrath and curſe of God? Shall we *make mirth of other people*, who have *gone a whoring from our God*? Hoſ. ix. 1. Should we now make mirth, when the hand of God is gone out againſt us, when God's judgments are abroad in the land, and he by them *calls to weeping and mourning*, Iſa. xxii. 11, 13. Shall we now make mirth as the king and Haman, when the church is in perplexity? *Eſth.* iii. 15. when we ſhould be *grieving for the affliction of Joſeph*, Amos vi. 6.

18. ¶ The word of the LORD came unto me again, ſaying, 19. Alſo thou ſon of man, appoint thee two ways, that the ſword of the king of Babylon may come: both twain ſhall come forth out of one land, and chooſe thou a place, chooſe *it* at the head of the way to the city. 20. Appoint a way, that the ſword may come to Rabbath of the Ammonites, and to Judah in Jeruſalem the defenced. 21. For the king of Babylon ſtood at the parting of the way, at the head of the two ways, to uſe divination: he made *his* arrows bright, he conſulted with images, he looked in the liver. 22. At his right hand was the divination for Jeruſalem to appoint captains, to open the mouth in the ſlaughter, to lift up the voice with ſhouting, to appoint *battering* rams againſt the gates, to caſt a mount, *and* to build a fort. 23. And it ſhall be unto them as a falſe divination in their ſight, to them that have ſworn oaths: but he will call to remembrance the iniquity, that they may be taken. 24. Therefore thus ſaith the Lord GOD, Becauſe ye have made your iniquity to be remembred, in that your tranſgreſſions are diſcovered, ſo that in all your doings your ſins do appear: becauſe, *I ſay*, that ye are come to remembrance, ye ſhall be taken with the hand. 25. ¶ And thou profane wicked prince of Iſrael, whoſe day is come, when iniquity *ſhall have* an end, 26. Thus ſaith the Lord GOD, Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this *ſhall* not *be* the ſame, exalt *him that is* low, and abaſe *him that is* high. 27. I will overturn, overturn, overturn it, and it ſhall be no *more* until he come whoſe right it is, and I will give it *him*.

The prophet in the verſes before had ſhewed them the ſword coming, he here ſhews them that ſword coming againſt them, that they might not flatter themſelves that by ſome means or other it ſhould be diverted a contrary way.

1. He muſt ſee and ſhew the Chaldean army coming againſt Jeruſalem, and determined by a ſupreme power ſo to do. The prophet muſt *appoint him two ways*, i. e. he muſt upon a paper draw out two roads, *ver.* 19. as ſometimes is done in maps; and he muſt bring the king of Babylon's army to the place where the roads part, for there they will make a ſtand. They both *come out of the ſame land*, but when they come to the place where one road leads to Rabba, the head city of the Ammonites, and the other to Jeruſalem, he makes a pauſe; for though he is reſolved to be the ruin of both, yet he is not determined which to attack *firſt*; here his politicks and his politicians leave him at a loſs: The ſword muſt go either to Rabbah, or *to Judah in Jeruſalem*. Many of the inhabitants of Judah had now taken ſhelter in Jeruſalem, and all the intereſts of the country were bound up in the ſafety of the city, and therefore it is called Judah in *Jeruſalem the defenced*; ſo ſtrongly fortified was it, both by nature and art, that it was thought impregnable, *Lam.* iv. 12. The prophet muſt deſcribe this *dilemma* that the king of Babylon is at, *ver.* 20. For *the king of Babylon ſtood*, i. e. he ſhall ſtand conſidering what courſe to take, *at the head of the two ways*. Though he was a prince of great foreſight and great reſolution, yet it ſeems he knew neither his own intereſt nor his own mind. Let not the wiſe man then glory in his wiſdom, nor the mighty man in his arbitrary power, for even thoſe that may do what they will, yet ſeldom know what to do for the beſt. Now obſerve, (1.) The method he took to come to a reſolution; he *uſed divination*, applied himſelf to a higher and inviſible power, either to the determination of providence by a lot, in order to which he *made his arrows bright* that were to be drawn for the lots, in honour of the ſolemnity. Perhaps Jeruſalem was written on one arrow, and Rabbah on the other, and that which was firſt drawn out of the quiver he determined to attack firſt. Or to the direction of ſome pretended oracle, he *conſulted with images*, or *Teraphim*, expecting to receive audible anſwers from them: Or, to the obſervations which the augurs made upon the entrails of the ſacrifices, *he looked in the liver*, whether the poſition of that portended good or ill luck. Note, It is a mortification to the pride of the wiſe men of the earth, that in difficult caſes they have been glad to make their court to heaven for direction; as it is an inſtance of their folly that they have taken ſuch ridiculous ways of doing it; when in caſes proper for an appeal to providence, it is ſufficient that *the lot be caſt into the lap*, with that prayer, *Give a perfect lot*, and a firm belief that the *diſpoſal thereof* is not fortuitous, but *of the Lord*, Prov. xvi. 33. (2.) The reſolution he was hereby brought to. Even by theſe ill practices God ſerved his own purpoſes, and directed him to go to Jeruſalem, ver. 22. *The divination for Jeruſalem*, happened to be *at his right hand*, which according to the rules of divination determined him *that way*. Note, What ſervices God deſigns men for, he will be ſure in his providence to lead them to, though perhaps they themſelves are not aware what conduct they are under. Well, Jeruſalem being the mark ſet up, the *campaign* is preſently *opened* with the ſiege of that *important place*. *Captains* are appointed for the command of the forces to be employed in the ſiege, who muſt open *the mouth in the ſlaughter*, muſt give *directions* to the ſoldiers what to do, and make *ſpeeches* to animate them. Orders are given to provide every thing neceſſary for carrying on the ſiege with vigour; *battering rams* muſt be prepared, and *forts built*. O what pains, what coſt, are men at to deſtroy one another!

2. He muſt ſhew both the people and the prince that they bring this deſtruction upon themſelves by their own ſin.

1. The people do ſo, *ver.* 23, 24. They ſlight the notices that are given them, of the judgment coming; Ezekiel's prophecy is to them a *falſe divination*; they are not moved or awakened to repentance by it. When they hear that Nebuchadnezzar by his divinations is directed to Jeruſalem, and aſſured of ſucceſs in that enterprize, they laugh at it, and continue *ſecure*, calling it a *falſe divination*; becauſe *they have ſworn oaths*; i. e. they have joined in a ſolemn league with the Egyptians, and they depend upon the promiſe they have made them to *raiſe the ſiege*, or upon the aſſurances which the falſe prophets have given them that it ſhall be raiſed. Or it may refer to the oaths of allegiance they had ſworn to the king of Babylon, but had violated; for which treachery of theirs, God had given them up to a judicial blindneſs, ſo that the *faireſt warnings* given them were ſlighted by them as *falſe divinations*. Note, Thoſe who make a jeſt of the moſt ſacred oaths, it is not ſtrange if they can make a jeſt likewiſe of the moſt ſacred oracles; for where will a profane mind ſtop? But ſhall *their unbelief* invalidate the counſel of God? Are they ſafe becauſe they are ſecure? By no means; nay, the

contempt they put upon divine warnings is a sin that brings to remembrance their other sins, and they may thank themselves if they be now remembered against them. (1.) Their *present* wickedness is *discovered*. Now God is contending with them, so perverse and obstinate are they, that whatever they offer in *their own defence* doth but *add to their offence*; they never carried themselves so ill as they did now they have the loudest call given them to repent and reform; *so that in all your doings your sins do appear*; turn you which way you will and you shew a black side: this is too true of every one of us; for not only there is *none that lives and sins not*, but *there is not a just man upon earth that doth good and sinneth not*. Our best services have such allays of weakness and folly and imperfection, and so much *evil* is *present with us*, even when we *would do good*, that we may say with sorrow and shame, *in all our doings*, and in all our sayings too, *our sins do appear*, and witness against us, so that if we were *under the law* we were undone. (2.) This brings to mind their former wickedness, *you have made your iniquity to be remembered*, not by your selves that it might be repented of, but by the justice of God that it might be reckoned for. Your own sins make the sins of your fathers to be remembred against you, which otherwise you should never have smarted for. Note, God remembers *former iniquities* against those only that by the *present discoveries* of their wickedness shew that they do not repent of them. (3.) That they may suffer for all together, they are turned over to the destroyer, *that they may be taken*, ver. 23. and *ye shall be taken with the hand* that God had appointed to seize you and to hold you, and out of which you cannot escape. Men are said to be *God's hand*, when they are made use of as the ministers of his justice, *Psal.* xvii. 14. Note, Those who will not be taken with the *word of God's grace*, shall at last be *taken by the hand* of his wrath.

2. The prince likewise brings his ruin upon himself. Zedekiah is the *prince of Israel*, to whom the prophet here in God's name addresseth himself; and if he had not spoken in God's name he would not have spoken so boldly, so bluntly; for *is it fit to say to a king, Thou art wicked?*

1. He gives him his character, *ver.* 25. Thou profane and *wicked prince of Israel!* He was not so bad as some of his predecessors, and yet bad enough to merit this character. He was himself profane, lost to every thing that is virtuous and sacred. And he was *wicked*, as he promoted sin among his people; he sinned and *made Israel to sin*. Note, Profaneness and wickedness is bad in any, but worst of all in a prince, a *prince of Israel*; that as an Israelite should know better himself, and as a prince give a better example, and have a better influence on those about him.

2. He reads him his doom: His iniquity *has an end*, the measure of it is full, and therefore *his day is come*, the day of his punishment, the day of divine vengeance. Note, Though they who are *wicked* and *profane* may flourish a while, yet *their day will come* to fall. The sentence here passed is, (1.) That Zedekiah shall be *deposed*; he has forfeited his crown, and he shall no longer wear it; he has by his profaneness profaned his crown, and it shall be *cast to the ground*. Ver. 26. *Remove the diadem*. Crowns and diadems are losable things; it is only in the other world that there is a crown of glory that fadeth not away; a *kingdom that cannot be moved*. The Chaldee paraphrase expounds it thus, *Take away the diadem from Seraiah the chief priest, and I will take away the crown from Zedekiah the king, neither this nor that shall abide in his place, but shall be removed. This shall not be the same*; not the same he has been; *this not this*. So the word is. Profane and wicked perhaps he is as he has been, but not *prince of Israel* as he has been. Note, Men lose their dignity by their iniquity. Their profaneness and wickedness removes their diadem, and takes off their crown, and makes them the reverse of what they were. (2.) That great confusion and disorder in the state shall follow hereupon; every thing shall be turned upside down. The conqueror shall take a pride in *exalting him that is low*, and *abasing him that is high*, preserving some, and degrading others at his pleasure, without any regard either to right or merit. (3.) Attempts to re-establish the government shall be blasted, and come to nothing; Gedaliah's particularly, and Ishmael's, who was *of the seed-royal*, to which the Chaldee paraphrase refers this, neither of them shall be able to make any thing of it. *I will overturn, overturn, overturn*, first one project, and then another; for who can build up what God will throw down? (4.) This monarchy shall never be restored, till it is fixed for perpetuity in the hands of the Messiah. There *shall be no more* kings of the house of David after Zedekiah, till Christ comes, *whose right the kingdom is*, who is that seed of David, in whom the promise was to have its full accomplishment, and *I will give it him*. He shall have *the throne of his father David*, Luke i. 32. Immediately before the coming of Christ there was a long eclipse of the royal dignity, as there was also a failing of the Spirit of prophecy, that his shining forth in the fulness of time both as king and prophet, might appear the more illustrious. Note, Christ has an incontestable title to the dominion and sovereignty both in the church, and in the world; the kingdom is *his right*. And having the right he shall in due time have the possession, *I will give it him*; and there shall be a general overturning of all rather than he shall come short of his right; and a certain overturning of all the opposition that stands in his way to make room for him, *Dan.* ii. 45. 1 *Cor.* xv. 25. This is mentioned here for the comfort of those who feared the promise made in David would fail for evermore. No, saith God, that promise is sure, for the Messiah's kingdom shall last for ever.

28. ¶ And thou son of man, prophesy, and say, Thus saith the Lord GOD concerning the Ammonites, and concerning their reproach: even say thou, The sword, the sword *is* drawn: for the slaughter *it is* furbished, to consume because of the glittering: 29. Whiles they see vanity unto thee, whiles they divine a lye unto thee, to bring thee upon the necks of *them that are* slain, of the wicked whose day is come, when their iniquity *shall have* an end. 30. Shall I cause *it* to return into his sheath? I will judge thee in the place where thou wast created, in the land of thy nativity. 31. And I will pour out mine indignation upon thee, I will blow against thee in the fire of my wrath, and deliver thee into the hand of brutish men, *and* skilful to destroy. 32. Thou shalt be for fuel to the fire: thy blood shall be in the midst of the land, thou shalt be no *more* remembred: for I the LORD have spoken *it*.

The prediction of the destruction of the Ammonites, which was effected by Nebuchadnezzar about five years after the destruction of Jerusalem, seems to come in here upon occasion of the king of Babylon's diverting his design against Rabbah, when he turned it upon Jerusalem; upon this the Ammonites grew very insolent, and triumphed over Jerusalem; but the prophet must let them know that forbearance is no acquittance; the reprieve is not a pardon; their day also is at hand; their turn comes next, and it will be but a poor satisfaction to them, that they are to be devoured last, to be last executed.

1. The sin of the Ammonites is here intimated; it is *their reproach*, ver. 28. (1.) The *reproach* they *put upon themselves* when they hearkened to their false prophets, (for such it seems there were among them, as well as among the Jews) that pretended to foretel their perpetual safety in the midst of the desolations that were made of the countries round about them. They *see vanity unto thee, and divine a lye*, ver. 29. They flatter thee with promises of peace, and thou art such a fool as to suffer thyself to be imposed upon by them, and to encourage them therein by giving credit to them. Note, Those that feed themselves with a self-conceit in the day of their prosperity, prepare matter for a self-reproach in the day of their calamity. (2.) The *reproach* they *put* upon *the Israel of God*, when they triumphed in their afflictions, and thereby added affliction to them, which was very barbarous and inhuman. Their divines by puffing them up with a conceit, that they were a better people than Israel, being spared when they were cut off, and with a confidence that their prosperity should always continue, made them so very haughty and insolent, that they did even *tread on the necks of the Israelites that were slain, slain by the wicked Chaldeans*, who had commission to execute God's judgments upon them when their *iniquity had an end*, i. e. when the measure of it was full, we shall meet with this again, *chap.* xxv. 3, *&c.* Note, Those are ripening apace for misery, who trample upon the people of God in their distress, whereas they ought to tremble when *judgment begins at the house of God*.

2. The utter destruction of the Ammonites is threatned. For the reproach cast on the church by her neighbours will be returned into their own bosom, *Psal.* lxxix. 12. Let us see how terrible the threatning is, and the destruction will be. (1.) It shall come *from the wrath of God*, who resents the indignities and injuries done to his people as done to himself, *ver.* 31. *I will pour out my indignation* as a shower of fire and brimstone *upon thee*; the least drop of divine *indignation and wrath* will create *tribulation and anguish* enough to the *soul of man that doth evil*: what then would a full stream of that indignation and wrath do? *I will blow against thee in the fire of my wrath*, i. e. I will blow up the fire of my wrath against thee, it shall burn with the utmost vehemence. And, *ver.* 32. *Thou shalt be for fuel to this fire*. Note, Wicked men make themselves fuel to the fire of God's wrath; they are consumed by it, and it is enflamed by them. (2.) It shall be effected by the sword of war; to them he must cry as before to Israel, because they had triumphed in Israel's overthrow. *The sword, the sword, is drawn*, ver. 28. compare *ver.* 9, 10. it is drawn *to consume because of the glittering*, i. e. because it is brandished and glitters, and is fit to be made use of. God's executions will answer his preparations. This sword when it is drawn *shall not return into its sheath*, ver. 30. till it has done the work for which it was drawn. When the sword is drawn it doth not *return* till *God causeth it to return*, and *he is in one mind, and who can turn him?* Who can change his purpose? (3.) Th

(3.) The perſons employed in it are *briutiſh men, and skilful to deſtroy.* Men of ſuch a bad character as this, that have the wit of men to do the work of wild beaſts; human reaſon which makes them *skilful*; but no human compaſſion, which makes them skilful only *to deſtroy*; though they are the ſcandal of mankind, yet ſometimes are made uſe of to ſerve God's purpoſes; God *delivers the Ammonites into the hands of ſuch*, and juſtly, for they themſelves were *brutiſh*, and delighted in the deſtruction of God's Iſrael. We have reaſon to pray as Paul deſired to be prayed for, that we may be *delivered from wicked and unreaſonable men*, 2 Theſſ. iii. 2. men that ſeem made for doing miſchief. (4.) The place where they ſhould thus be reckoned with; *I will judge thee there where thou waſt created*, where thou waſt firſt formed into a people, and where thou haſt been ſettled ever ſince, and therefore where thou ſeemeſt to have taken root; *the land of thy nativity* ſhall be the land of thy deſtruction. Note, God can bring ruin upon us there where we are moſt ſecure; and turn us out of that land which we thought we had a title to, not to be diſputed, and a poſſeſſion of not to be diſturbed. *Thy blood ſhall be ſhed* not only in thy borders, but *in the midſt of thy land.* Laſtly, It ſhall be an irreparable ruin; though thou mayeſt think to recover thy ſelf, it is in vain to think of it, thou *ſhalt be no more remembered* with any reſpect, *Pſal.* ix. 6. Juſtly is their name blotted out who would have Iſrael's name for ever loſt.

CHAP. XXII.

Here are three ſeveral meſſages which God intruſts the prophet to deliver concerning Judah and Jeruſalem, and all to the ſame purpoſe, to ſhew them their ſins, and the judgments that were coming upon them for thoſe ſins. (1.) *Here is a catalogue of their ſins, by which they had expoſed themſelves to ſhame, and for which God would bring them to ruin*, ver. 1—16. (2.) *They are here compared to droſs, and are condemned as droſs to the fire*, ver. 17—22. (3.) *All orders and degrees of men among them are here found guilty of the neglect of the duty of their place, and of having contributed to the national guilt, which therefore, ſince none appeared as interceſſors, they muſt all expect to ſhare in the puniſhment of*, ver. 23—31.

1. MOreover, the word of the LORD came unto me, ſaying, 2. Now thou ſon of man, wilt thou judge, wilt thou judge the bloody city? yea, thou ſhalt ſhew her all her abominations. 3. Then ſay thou, Thus ſaith the Lord GOD, The city ſheddeth blood in the midſt of it, that her time may come, and maketh idols againſt her ſelf, to defile her ſelf. 4. Thou art become guilty in thy blood that thou haſt ſhed, and haſt defiled thy ſelf in thine idols which thou haſt made, and thou haſt cauſed thy days to draw near, and art come *even* unto thy years; therefore have I made thee a reproach unto the heathen, and a mocking to all countries. 5. *Thoſe that be* near, and *thoſe that be* far from thee, ſhall mock thee, *which art* infamous, *and* much vexed. 6. Behold, the princes of Iſrael, every one were in thee to their power to ſhed blood. 7. In thee have they ſet light by father and mother: in the midſt of thee have they dealt by oppreſſion with the ſtranger: in thee have they vexed the fatherleſs and the widow. 8. Thou haſt deſpiſed mine holy things, and haſt profaned my ſabbaths. 9. In thee are men that carry tales to ſhed blood: and in thee they eat upon the mountains: in the midſt of thee they commit lewdneſs. 10. In thee have they diſcovered their fathers nakedneſs: in thee have they humbled her that was ſet apart for pollution. 11. And one hath committed abomination with his neighbours wife, and another hath lewdly defiled his daughter in law, and another in thee hath humbled his ſiſter, his fathers daughter. 12. In thee have they taken gifts to ſhed blood: thou haſt taken uſury and increaſe, and thou haſt greedily gained of thy neighbours by extortion, and haſt forgotten me, ſaith the Lord GOD. 13. ¶ Behold therefore, I have ſmitten mine hand at thy diſhoneſt gain which thou haſt made, and at thy blood which hath been in the midſt of thee. 14. Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be ſtrong in the days that I ſhall deal with thee? I the LORD have ſpoken *it*, and will do *it*. 15. And I will ſcatter thee among the heathen, and diſperſe thee in the countries, and will conſume thy filthineſs out of thee. 16. And thou ſhalt take thine inheritance in thy ſelf in the ſight of the heathen, and thou ſhalt know that I *am* the LORD.

In theſe verſes the prophet by a commiſſion from heaven is ſet as a judge upon the bench, and Jeruſalem is made to hold up her hand as a priſoner at the bar; and if prophets were ſet over other nations, much more over God's nation, *Jer.* i. 10. This prophet is authorized to *judge the bloody city*; the *city of bloods*; Jeruſalem is ſo called not only becauſe ſhe had been guilty of the particular ſin of blood-ſhed, but becauſe her crimes in general were *bloody crimes*, chap. vii. 23. ſuch as polluted her in her blood, and for which ſhe deſerved to have blood given her to drink. Now the buſineſs of a judge with a malefactor is to convict him of his crimes, and then to paſs ſentence upon him for them: Theſe two things Ezekiel is to do here.

1. He is to find Jeruſalem guilty of many heinous crimes here enumerated in a long bill of indictment, and it is *billa vera*; ſo he writes upon it, whoſe judgment, we are ſure, is according to truth. He muſt *ſhew her all her abominations*, ver. 2. that God may be juſtified in all the deſolations brought upon her. Let us take a view of all the particular ſins which Jeruſalem here ſtands charged with; and they are all exceeding ſinful.

1. Muther; *the city ſheds blood*, not only in the ſuburbs where the ſtrangers dwell, but *in the midſt of it*, where one would think the magiſtrates would if any where be vigilant. Even there people were murthered either in duels, or by ſecret aſſaſſinations and poiſonings, or in the courts of juſtice under colour of law, and there was no care taken to diſcover and puniſh the murtherers, according to the law, *Gen.* ix. 6. no nor ſo much as the ceremony uſed to expiate an uncertain murther, *Deut.* xxi. 1. and ſo the guilt and pollution remains upon the city. Thus *thou art become guilty in thy blood that thou haſt ſhed*, ver. 4. This crime is inſiſted moſt upon for it was Jeruſalem's meaſure-filling ſin more than any other; it is ſaid to be that *which the Lord would not pardon*, 2 Kings xxiv. 4. (1.) The *princes of Iſrael* that ſhould have been the protectors of injured innocence, *every one were to their power to ſhed blood*, ver. 6. They thirſted for it, and delighted in it, and whoever came within their power were ſure to *feel it*; whoever lay at their mercy were ſure to *find none.* (2.) There were thoſe who *carried tales to ſhed blood*, ver. 9. They told lies of men to the princes, to whom they knew it would be pleaſing, to incenſe them againſt them; or betrayed what paſſed in private converſation to make miſchief among neighbours, and ſet them together by the ears, to bite, and devour and worry one another even to death. Note, Thoſe who by giving invidious characters, and telling ill-natured ſtories of their neighbours, ſow diſcord among brethren, will be accountable for all the miſchief that follows upon it; as he that kindles a fire will be for all the hurt it doth. (3.) There were thoſe who *took gifts to ſhed blood*, ver. 12. that would be hired with money to ſwear a man out of his life, or if they were upon a jury would be bribed to find an innocent man guilty. When ſo much barbarous bloody work of this kind was done in Jeruſalem, we may well conclude, (1.) That mens conſciences were become wretchedly profligate, and ſeared, and their hearts hardned; for they would ſtick at no wickedneſs that would not ſtick at this. (2.) That abundance of quiet harmleſs good people were made away, whereby as the guilt of the city was increaſed, ſo the number of thoſe that ſhould have ſtood in the gap to turn away the wrath of God was diminiſhed.

2. Idolatry. *She maketh idols againſt herſelf to deſtroy herſelf*, ver. 3. And again, *ver.* 4. *Thou haſt defiled thyſelf in thine idols which thou haſt made.* Note, Thoſe who make idols *for themſelves* will be found to have made them *againſt themſelves*, for idolaters put a cheat upon themſelves, and prepare deſtruction for themſelves; beſides that thereby they *pollute themſelves*, they render themſelves odious in the eyes of the juſt and jealous God, and even *their mind and conſcience is defiled*, ſo that to them *nothing is pure.* Thoſe that did not make idols themſelves, yet were found guilty of *eating upon the mountains*, or high places, *ver.* 9. in honour of the idols, and in communion with idolaters.

3. Diſobedience to parents. Ver. 7. *In thee have* the children *ſet light by their father and mother*, mocked them, curſed them, and deſpiſed to obey them, which was a ſign of a more than ordinary corruption of nature, as well as manners, and a diſpoſition to all manner of diſorder, *Iſa.* iii. 5. They that ſet light by their parents are in the highway to all wickedneſs. God had made many wholſome laws for the ſupport of the paternal authority, but no care was taken to put them in execution; nay, the Phariſees in their day taught children under pretence of reſpect to the Corban, to ſet light by their parents, and refuſe to maintain them, *Matth.* xv. 5.

4. Oppreſſion and extortion. To enrich themſelves they wronged the poor, *ver.* 7. *They dealt by oppreſſion*, and *deceit*, *with the ſtranger*, taking advantage of his neceſſities, and his ignorance of the laws and cuſtoms of the country. In Jeruſalem, that ſhould have been a ſanctuary to the oppreſſed, *they vexed the fatherleſs and widows* by unreaſonable demands and inquiſitions, or troubleſome law-ſuits, in which might prevails againſt right.

Thou

Thou haſt taken uſury and increaſe, ver. 12. not only there are thoſe in thee that do it, but *thou haſt done it*; it was an act of the city, or community, the publick money that ſhould have been employed in publick charity is put out to uſury with extortion. *Thou haſt greedily gained of thy neighbours* by *violence* and *wrong*. For neighbours to gain by one another in a way of fair trading is well, but thoſe who are *greedy of gain* will not be held within the rules of equity.

5. Profanation of the ſabbath, and other holy things. This commonly goes along with the other ſins for which they here ſtand indicted; *ver.* 8. *Thou haſt deſpiſed mine holy things*, holy oracles, holy ordinances; the rites which God appointed were thought too plain, too ordinary, they deſpiſed them, and therefore were fond of the cuſtoms of the heathen. Note, Immorality and diſhoneſty is commonly attended with a contempt of religion, and the worſhip of God. *Thou haſt profaned my ſabbaths*. There was not in Jeruſalem that face of ſabbath-ſanctification that one would have expected in the *holy city*. Sabbath-breaking is an iniquity that is an inlet to all iniquity. Many have owned it to contribute as much to their ruin as any thing.

6. Uncleanneſs and all manner of ſeventh commandment ſins, fruits of thoſe vile affections to which God in a way of righteous judgment gives men up to puniſh them for their idolatry, and profanation of holy things. Jeruſalem had been famous for its purity, but now *in the midſt of thee they commit lewdneſs*, ver. 9. it goes bare-faced, tho' in the moſt ſcandalous inſtances: as that of a man's having his father's wife, which is the *diſcovery of the father's nakedneſs*, ver. 10. and is a ſin not *to be named among Chriſtians* without the utmoſt deteſtation, 1 *Cor.* v. 1. and was made a capital crime by the law of Moſes, *Lev.* xx. 11. The time *to refrain from embracing* has not been obſerved, *Eccl.* iii. 6. *For they have humbled her that was ſet apart for her pollution*. They made nothing of committing leudneſs with a *neighbour's wife*, with a *daughter-in-law*, or a ſiſter, *ver.* 11. And *ſhall not God viſit for theſe things?*

7. Unmindfulneſs of God was at the bottom of all this wickedneſs. *Ver.* 12. *Thou haſt forgotten me*, elſe thou wouldeſt not have done thus. Note, Sinners do that which provokes God, becauſe they *forget* him; they forget their deſcent from him, dependence on him, and obligations to him; they forget how valuable his favour is which they make themſelves unfit for; and how formidable his wrath which they make themſelves obnoxious to. They that *pervert their ways forget the Lord their God*, Jer. iii. 21.

2. He is to *paſs ſentence* upon Jeruſalem for theſe crimes. 1. Let her know, that ſhe has filled up the meaſure of her iniquity, and her ſins are ſuch as forbid delays, and call for ſpeedy vengeance. She has made *her time to come*, ver. 3. *her days to draw near*, and ſhe *is come to her years* of maturity for puniſhment, *ver.* 4. as an heir that is *come to age*, and is ready for his inheritance. God would have been longer with them, but they were arrived to ſuch a pitch of impudence in ſin, that God could not in honour give them a further day. Note, Abuſed patience will at laſt be weary of forbearing. And when ſinners (as Solomon ſpeaks) grow *overmuch wicked* they *die before their time*, Eccl. vii. 17. and ſhorten their reprieves. 2. Let her know, that ſhe hath expoſed herſelf, and therefore God has juſtly expoſed her to the contempt and ſcorn of all her neighbours. *Ver.* 4. *I have made thee a reproach to the heathen*, both *thoſe that are near*, who are eye-witneſſes of Jeruſalem's apoſtaſy and degeneracy; and *thoſe afar off*, who tho' at a diſtance, will think it worth taking notice of, *ver.* 5. they ſhall all *mock thee*. While they were reproached by their neighbours for their adherence to God, it was their honour, and they might be ſure that God would roll away their reproach: But now they are laughed at for their revolt from God, they muſt lie down in their ſhame, and muſt ſay, *The Lord is righteous*. They make a mock at Jeruſalem, both becauſe her ſins had been very *ſcandalous*, ſhe is *infamous*, *polluted in name*, and has quite loſt her credit; and becauſe her puniſhment is very *grievous*, ſhe is *much vexed*, and frets without meaſure at her troubles. Note, Theſe that vex moſt at their troubles have commonly thoſe about them, that will be ſo much the more apt to *make a jeſt* of them.

3. Let her know that God is diſpleaſed, highly diſpleaſed at her wickedneſs, and doth and will witneſs againſt it. *Ver.* 13. *I have ſmitten mine hand at thy diſhoneſt gain*. God both by his prophets, and by his providence, revealed his wrath from heaven againſt their *ungodlineſs* and *unrighteouſneſs*; the oppreſſions they were guilty of, tho' they got by them, and *their murthers*, the *blood*, *which has been in the midſt of thee*; and all their other ſins. Note, God hath ſufficiently diſcovered how angry he is at the wicked courſes of his people; and that they may not ſay but they have had fair warning, he *ſmites his hand* againſt the ſin before he *lays his hand* upon the ſinner. And this is a good reaſon why we ſhould *deſpiſe* diſhoneſt gain, even the *gain of oppreſſions*, and *ſhake our hands from holding of bribes*, becauſe theſe are ſins againſt which God *ſhakes his hands*, Iſa. xxxiii. 15.

4. Let her know, that as proud and ſecure as ſhe is, ſhe is no match for God's judgments, *ver.* 14. (1.) She is aſſured that the deſtruction ſhe has deſerved will come. *I the Lord have ſpoken it, and will do it*. He that is true to his promiſes will be true to his threatnings too, for he is not a man that he ſhould repent. (2.) It is ſuppoſed that ſhe thinks herſelf able to contend with God, and to ſtand a ſiege againſt his judgments; ſhe bid defiance to the day of the Lord, *Iſa.* v. 19. But, (3.) She is convinced of her utter inability to make her part good with him. *Can thine heart endure, or can thine hand be ſtrong, in the days that I ſhall deal with thee?* Thou thinkeſt thou haſt to do only with men like thyſelf, but ſhalt be made to know thou falleſt into the hands of a living God. Obſerve here, (1.) There is a day coming when God will *deal with ſinners*, a day of viſitation. He *deals with ſome* to bring them to repentance, and there is no reſiſting the force of convictions, when he ſets them on; he *deals* with others to bring them to ruin; he *deals with ſinners* in this life, when he brings upon them his ſore judgments. But the *days of eternity* are eſpecially the days in which God will *deal with them*; when the full vials of God's wrath will be poured out without mixture. (2.) The wrath of God againſt ſinners, when he comes to deal with them, will be found both intolerable, and irreſiſtible. There is no heart *ſtout* enough to *endure* it; it is none of the *infirmities* which the *ſpirit of a man will ſuſtain*; damned ſinners can neither forget nor deſpiſe their torments, nor have they any thing wherewith to ſupport themſelves under their torments. There are no hands ſtrong enough either to ward off the ſtrokes of God's wrath, or to break the chains with which ſinners are bound over to the day of wrath. *Who knows the power of God's anger?*

5. Let her know, that ſince ſhe has walked in the way of the heathen, and learned their works, ſhe ſhall have enough of them, ver. 15. *I will* not only ſend thee *among the heathen*, out of thine own land, but *I will ſcatter thee* among them, and *diſperſe thee in the countries*, to be abuſed and inſulted over by ſtrangers. And ſince her *filthineſs* and *filthy ones* continued in her, notwithſtanding all the methods God had taken to *refine* her, ſhe *would not be made clean*, Jer. xiii. 27. He will by his judgments *conſume her filthineſs out of her*; he will deſtroy thoſe that were incurably bad, and reform thoſe that were inclined to be good.

6. Let her know, that God has diſowned her, and caſt her off; he had been her heritage and portion, but now, *ver.* 16. *Thou ſhalt take thine inheritance in thyſelf*, ſhift for thyſelf, make the beſt hand thou canſt for thyſelf, for God will no longer undertake for thee. Note, Thoſe that give up themſelves to be *ruled* by their luſts will juſtly be given up to be *portioned* by them. They that reſolve to be their own maſters, let them expect no other comfort and happineſs, but what their own hands can furniſh them with, and a miſerable portion it will prove; *verily, I ſay unto you they have their reward. Thou in thy life-time receivedſt thy good things*. Theſe are the ſame with this here, *thou ſhalt take thine inheritance in thyſelf*, and then when it is too late; and own it *in the ſight of the heathen, that I am the Lord*, who alone am a portion ſufficient for my people. Note, Thoſe that have loſt their intereſt in God, will know how to value it.

17. And the word of the LORD came unto me, ſaying; 18. Son of man, the houſe of Iſrael is to me become droſs, all they *are* braſs, and tin, and iron, and lead, in the midſt of the furnace, they are *even* the droſs of ſilver. 19. Therefore thus ſaith the Lord GOD, Becauſe ye are all become droſs, behold therefore I will gather you into the midſt of Jeruſalem. 20. *As* they gather ſilver, and braſs, and iron, and lead, and tin into the midſt of the furnace, to blow the fire upon it, to melt *it*; ſo will I gather *you* in mine anger, and in my fury, and I will leave *you there*, and melt you. 21. Yea, I will gather you, and blow upon you in the fire of my wrath, and ye ſhall be melted in the midſt thereof. 22. As ſilver is melted in the midſt of the furnace, ſo ſhall ye be melted in the midſt thereof; and ye ſhall know that I the LORD have poured out my fury upon you.

The ſame melancholy ſtring is ſtill harped upon; and various turns given it to make it affecting, that it may be influencing. The prophet muſt here ſhew, or at leaſt it is here ſhewn him, that the whole houſe of Iſrael is become as *droſs*, and *as droſs* they ſhall be conſumed. What David has ſaid concerning the wicked ones of the world, is here ſaid concerning the wicked ones of the church, now it is corrupt and degenerate, *Pſal.* cxix. 119. *Thou puttеſt away all the wicked of the earth like droſs.*

1. See here how the wretched degeneracy of the houſe of Iſrael is deſcribed. That ſtate in David's and Solomon's time had been *a head of gold*, when the kingdoms were divided it was as the *arms of ſilver*. But now, (1.) It is *degenerated* into *baſer mettal*, of no value in compariſon with what it formerly was. *They are all braſs, and tin, and iron, and lead*; which ſome make to ſignify divers ſorts of ſinners among them; their being *braſs* notes the impudence of ſome in their wickedneſs, they are *brazen-faced*, and cannot bluſh; their *ſhoes* had been *iron and braſs*, Deut xxxiii. 25. but now their brow is ſo, *Iſa.* xlviii. 4. Their being *tin* notes the hypocritical profeſſion of piety, with which many of them cover their iniquity; they have a ſpecious ſhew but no intrinſick worth. Their being *iron* notes the cruel diſpoſition of ſome, and their delight in war, according to the character of the *iron age*. Their being

being *lead* notes their dulneſs, ſottiſhneſs, and ſtupidity: Tho' ſoft and pliable to evil, yet heavy and not moveable to good. *How is the gold become droſs, how is the moſt fine gold changed!* So is Jeruſalem's degeneracy bewailed, *Lam.* iv. 1. Yet this is not the worſt, theſe metals tho' of leſs value, yet are of good uſe. But, (2.) The *houſe of Iſrael is become droſs to me.* So ſhe is in God's account whatever ſhe is in her own and her neighbours account. They were *ſilver*, but now they are *even the droſs of ſilver*; the word ſignifies all the dirt and rubbiſh, and worthleſs ſtuff that is ſeparated from the ſilver in the waſhing, melting, and refining of it. Note, Sinners, and eſpecially degenerate profeſſors, are in God's account *as droſs*; vile and contemptible, and of no account, as the *evil figs* which *could not be eaten they were ſo evil.* They are *uſeleſs* and fit for nothing; of no conſiſtency with themſelves, and no ſervice to man.

2. How the woful deſtruction of this degenerate houſe of Iſrael is foretold. They are all gathered together in Jeruſalem, thither people fled from all parts of the country, as to a city of refuge, not only becauſe it was a *ſtrong city*, but becauſe it was the *holy city.* Now God tells them, that their flocking into Jeruſalem, which they intended for their ſecurity, ſhould be as the gathering of various ſorts of metal into the furnace, or crucible, to be melted down, and to have the droſs ſeparated from them. They are *in the midſt of Jeruſalem* ſurrounded by the forces of the enemy; and being thus incloſed, (1.) The *fire of God's wrath* ſhall be kindled upon this furnace, and it ſhall be *blown* to make it burn fiercely, and ſtrongly, *ver.* 20, 21. God will *gather them in his anger and fury.* The *blowing of the fire* makes a *great noiſe*, ſo will the judgments of God upon Jeruſalem; when God ſtirs up himſelf to execute judgments upon a provoking people, from the conſideration of his own glory, and the neceſſity of making ſome examples, then he may be ſaid to *blow the fire of his wrath* againſt ſin and ſinners, to *heat the furnace ſeven times hotter.* (2.) The ſeveral ſorts of metal gathered in it ſhall be *melted*; by a complication of judgments, as by a raging fire, their conſtitution ſhall be diſſolved, they ſhall loſe all their former ſhape and ſtrength; and ſhall be utterly unable to ſtand before the wrath of God. The various ſorts of ſinners ſhall be melted down together, and united in a common overthrow, as *braſs* and *lead* in the ſame furnace; as trees are *bound in bundles for the fire.* They came together into Jeruſalem as a place of defence, but God brought them together there as unto a place of execution. (3.) God will *leave them* in the furnace. *Ver.* 20. I will *gather you into the furnace*, and will *leave you there.* When God brings his own people into the furnace, he ſits by them as the refiner by his gold, to ſee that they be not continued there any longer than is fitting and needful; but he will bring theſe people into the furnace, as men throw droſs into it, which they deſign ſhall be conſumed, and therefore are in no care about it, but *leave it there.* Compare with this, *Hoſ.* v. 14. *I will tear and go away.* (4.) Hereby the droſs ſhall be wholly ſeparated, and the good metal purified, the impenitent ſhall be deſtroyed, and the penitent reformed and fitted for deliverance; *Take away the droſs from the ſilver, and there ſhall come forth a veſſel for the finer*, Prov. xxv. 4. This judgment ſhall do that in the houſe of Iſrael, for the doing of which other methods had been tried in vain, and *reprobate ſilver ſhall they no more be called*, Jer. vi. 30.

23. ¶ And the word of the LORD came unto me, ſaying, 24. Son of man, ſay unto her, Thou art the land *that* is not cleanſed, nor rained upon in the day of indignation. 25. *There is* a conſpiracy of her prophets in the midſt thereof, like a roring lion ravening the prey: they have devoured ſouls: they have taken the treaſure and precious things: they have made her many widows in the midſt thereof. 26. Her prieſts have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they ſhewed *difference* between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my ſabbaths, and I am profaned among them. 27. Her princes in the midſt thereof *are* like wolves ravening the prey, to ſhed blood, *and* to deſtroy ſouls, to get diſhoneſt gain. 28. And her prophets have daubed them with untempered *morter*, ſeeing vanity, and divining lyes unto them, ſaying, Thus ſaith the Lord GOD, when the LORD hath not ſpoken. 29. The people of the land have uſed oppreſſion, and exerciſed robbery, and have vexed the poor and needy: yea, they have oppreſſed the ſtranger wrongfully. 30. And I ſought for a man among them that ſhould make up the hedge, and ſtand in the gap before me for the land, that I ſhould not deſtroy it: but I found none. 31. Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them, I have conſumed them with the fire of my wrath: their own way have I recompenſed upon their heads, ſaith the Lord GOD.

Here is, 1. A general idea given of the land of Iſrael, how well it deſerved the judgments coming to deſtroy it, and how much it needed theſe judgments to refine it. Let the prophet tell her plainly, *Thou art the land that is not cleanſed*, not refined as metal is, and therefore needeſt to be again put into the furnace; means and methods of reformation have been ineffectual; thou art *not rained upon in the day of indignation.* This was one of the judgments which God brought upon them in the day of his wrath, he *withheld the rain* from them, *Jer.* xiv. 4. Or when thou art under the tokens of God's diſpleaſure, even in the day of indignation thou art *not rained upon*, i. e. Thou haſt not received inſtruction by the prophets, whoſe *doctrine* is ſaid to *deſcend as the rain*: or, when thou art corrected thou art not cleanſed, thy filth is not carried away as that in the ſtreets is by a ſweeping rain. Nay, tho' it be a *day of indignation* with thee, yet thy filthineſs which ſhould be done away, is become more *offenſive*, as that of a city is in dry weather, when it is not rained upon. Or, Thou haſt nothing to refreſh and comfort thyſelf with *in the day of indignation*; thou art not *rained upon* by divine conſolations; as the rich man in torment had not a *drop of water*, or rain, *to cool his tongue.*

2. A particular charge drawn up againſt the ſeveral orders and degrees of men among them, which ſhews that they had all helped to fill the meaſures of the nation's guilt, but none had done any thing towards the emptying of it, they are therefore all alike.

1. They have every one *corrupted his way*, and thoſe who ſhould have been the brighteſt examples of virtue, were ring-leaders in iniquity, and patterns of vice.

(1.) The *prophets* that pretended to make known the mind of God to them, were not only *deceivers*, but *devourers*, ver. 25. and hardned them in their wickedneſs, both by their preaching, wherein they promiſed them impunity and proſperity, and by their converſation, in which they were as profligate as any. *There is a conſpiracy of her prophets* againſt God and religion, againſt the true prophets and all good men; they conſpired together to be all in one ſong, as Ahab's prophets were, to aſſure them of peace in their ſinful ways. Note, The unity that is among pretenders to infallibility, and which they ſo much boaſt of, is only the reſult of a ſecret *conſpiracy* againſt the truth. Satan is not *divided againſt himſelf.* The prophets are *in conſpiracy* with the murtherers and oppreſſors, to patronize and protect them in their wickedneſs, and juſtify what they did with their falſe prophecies, provided they may come in ſharers with them in the profits of it. They are like *a roaring lion ravening the prey*, they thunder out threats againſt them whoſe ruin is aimed at, terrify them, or make them odious to the people, and ſo make themſelves maſters, (1.) *Of their lives*, they *have devoured ſouls*, have been acceſſary to the ſhedding of the blood of many an innocent perſon; and ſo have *made many* to become ſorrowful widows, that were comfortable wives. They have perſecuted thoſe to death, who witneſſed againſt their pretenſions to prophecy, and would not be impoſed upon by their counterfeit commiſſion. Or they *devoured ſouls* by flattering ſinners into a *falſe peace*, and a *vain hope*, and ſeducing them into the paths of ſin, which would be their eternal ruin. Note, Thoſe who draw men to wickedneſs, and encourage them in it, are the devourers and murtherers of their ſouls. (2.) *Of their eſtates*, when Naboth is ſlain, they take poſſeſſion of his vineyard; *they have ſeized the treaſure and precious things*, as forfeited; ſome ways or other they had of *devouring the widows houſes*, as the Phariſees, *Mat.* xxiii. 14. Or, they got this *treaſure*, and all theſe *precious things*, as fees for falſe and flattering prophecies; for *he that puts not into their mouths, they even prepare war againſt him*, Mic. iii. 6. It was ſad with Jeruſalem when ſuch men as theſe paſſed for prophets. (2.) The prieſts who were teachers by office, and had the cuſtody of the ſacred things, and ſhould have called the falſe prophets to account, were as bad as they, *ver.* 26. (1.) They *violated the law* of God, which they ſhould have obſerved, and taught others to obſerve: they made no conſcience of the law of the prieſthood, but openly broke it, and with contempt, as Hophni and Phineas. They did what they had a mind, with an expreſs *non obſtante* to the command of God. And how ſhould they teach the people their duty, who lived in contradiction to their own? (2.) They *profaned God's holy things*, about which they were to miniſter, and which they ought to have reſtrained others from the profanation of. They ſuffered thoſe to eat of the holy things that were unqualified by the law, the table of the Lord was contemptible with them; by dealing in holy things with ſuch unhallowed hands, they did themſelves *profane* them. (3.) They did not themſelves *put a difference*, nor did they ſhew the people how to *put a difference between the holy and profane, the clean and the unclean*, according to the directions and diſtinctions of the law. They did not exclude thoſe from God's courts that were excluded by the law, nor teach the people to obſerve the difference the law had made between food clean and unclean; between times and places holy and common; but lived at large themſelves, and encouraged the people to do ſo too. (4.) They *hid their eyes from God's ſabbaths*, i. e. they took no care about them, it was all one to them whether God's ſabbaths were kept holy or no; they neither gave countenance

to thoſe who obſerved them, nor check to thoſe who profaned them, nor did they themſelves ſhew any regard to them, or veneration for them. They *winked* at thoſe who did ſervile works on that day, and *looked another way* when they ſhould have inſpected the behaviour of the people on ſabbath days. God's ſabbaths have ſuch a beauty and glory put upon them by the divine inſtitution, as may command reſpect; but they *hid their eyes* from them, and would not ſee that excellency in them. (5.) By all this God himſelf was *profaned among them*; his authority was ſlighted, his goodneſs made light of, and the higheſt affront and contempt imaginable put upon his holineſs. Note, The profanation of the honour of the ſcriptures, of ſabbaths, and ſacred things, is a profanation of the honour of God himſelf, who is intereſted in them. (3.) The princes, who ſhould have interpoſed with their authority, to redreſs theſe grievances, were as daring tranſgreſſors of the law as any other; *ver.* 27. *they are like wolves ravening the prey:* for ſuch is power without juſtice and goodneſs to direct it. All their buſineſs was to gratify, (1.) Their own pride and ambition, by making themſelves arbitrary, and formidable. (2.) Their own malice and revenge, by *ſhedding blood*, and *deſtroying ſouls*, ſacrificing to their cruelty all thoſe that ſtood in their way, or had in any thing diſobliged them. (3.) Their own avarice; all they aim at is to *get diſhoneſt gain*, by cruſhing and oppreſſing their ſubjects; *Lucri bonus eſt odor ex re qualibet. Rem, rem quocunque modo rem.* But tho' they had not power ſufficient to carry them on in their oppreſſive courſes, yet how could they anſwer it both to their credit, and to their conſciences? we are told how, *ver.* 28. the prophets *daubed them with untempered morter*; told them in God's name, (horrid wickedneſs!) that there was no harm in what they did, they might diſpoſe of the lives and eſtates of their ſubjects as they pleaſed, and could do no wrong; nay, that in proſecuting ſuch and ſuch whom they had marked out, they did God ſervice: and thus they ſtopped the mouth of their conſciences; they alſo *juſtified* what they did to the people, nay, and *magnified* it, as if it were all for the publick good, and ſo ſaved their reputation, and kept their oppreſſed ſubjects from murmuring. Note, *Daubing prophets* are the great ſupporters of *ravening princes*, but will prove at laſt their great deceivers, for they daub with *untempered morter*, which will not hold, nor will the wall ſtand long that is built up with it. They pretend to be ſeers, but they *ſee vanity*; they pretend to be diviners, but they *divine lies:* they pretend a warrant from heaven for what they ſay, and that it is all as true as goſpel; they ſay, *Thus ſaith the Lord God*, but it is all a ſham, for *the Lord has not ſpoken any ſuch thing*.

(4.) The people that had any power in their hands learned of their princes to abuſe it, *ver.* 29. They that ſhould have complained of the oppreſſion of the ſubject, and have put in a *claim of rights* on behalf of the injured, that ſhould have ſtood up for liberty and property, were themſelves invaders of it; *The people of the land have uſed oppreſſion, and exerciſed robbery.* The rich oppreſs the poor, maſters their ſervants, landlords their tenants, and even parents their own children; nay, the buyers and ſellers will find ſome way to oppreſs one another: this is ſuch a ſin as when it is national, is indeed a national judgment, and is threatned as ſuch, *Iſa.* iii. 5. *The people ſhall be oppreſſed every one by his neighbour.* It is an aggravation of the ſin, that they have *vexed the poor and needy*, whom they ſhould have relieved, and have *oppreſſed the ſtranger*, and deprived him of *his right*, to whom they ought to have been not only *juſt* but *kind.* Thus was the apoſtaſy univerſal, and the diſeaſe epidemical.

2. There is none that appears as an interceſſor for them; *ver.* 30. *I ſought for a man among them, that ſhould ſtand in the gap, but I found none.* Note, (1.) Sin makes a gap in the hedge of protection that is about a people, at which good things run out from them, and evil things pour in upon them; a gap by which God enters to deſtroy them. (2.) There is a way of ſtanding in the gap, and making up the breach againſt the judgments of God, by repentance and prayer, and reformation; Moſes ſtood in the gap when he made interceſſion for Iſrael to *turn away the wrath of God*, Pſal. cxxvi. 23. (3.) When God is coming forth againſt a ſinful people to deſtroy them, he expects ſome to intercede for them, and enquires if there be but one that doth; ſo much is it his deſire and delight to ſhew mercy. If there be but a man that ſtands in the gap, as Abraham for Sodom, he will diſcover him, and be well pleaſed with him. (4.) It bodes ill to a people when judgments are breaking in upon them, and the ſpirit of prayer is reſtrained, ſo that *not one is found* that will either give them a good word, or ſpeak a good word for them. (5.) When it is ſo, what can be expected but utter ruin? *ver.* 31. *Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them*, have given it full ſcope that it may come upon them in a full ſtream; yet whatever God's wrath inflicts upon a people, it is *their own way* that is therein *recompenſed upon their heads*, and God deals with them no worſe, look how much better than their iniquity deſerves.

CHAP. XXIII.

This long chapter, as before, chap. xvi. *and* xx. *is a hiſtory of the apoſtaſies of God's people from him, and the aggravations of thoſe apoſtaſies under the ſimilitude of corporal whoredom and adultery; here the kingdoms of Iſrael and Judah, the ten tribes and the two, with their capital cities Samaria and Jeruſalem, are conſidered diſtinctly. Here is,* (1.) *The apoſtaſy of Iſrael and Samaria from God,* ver. 1—8. *And their ruin for it,* ver. 9, 10. (2.) *The apoſtaſy of Judah and Jeruſalem from God,* ver. 11—21. *And ſentence paſſed upon them, that they ſhall in like manner be deſtroyed for it,* ver. 22—35. (3.) *The joint-wickedneſs of them both together,* ver. 36—44. *and the joint-ruin of them both,* ver. 45—49. *And all that is written for warning againſt the ſins of idolatry, and confidence in an arm of fleſh, and ſinful leagues and confederacies with wicked people, which are the ſins here meant by committing whoredom, is, that others may hear and fear, and not ſin after the ſimilitude of the tranſgreſſions of Iſrael and Judah.*

1. THE word of the LORD came again unto me, ſaying, 2. Son of man, there were two women the daughters of one mother. 3. And they committed whoredoms in Egypt, they committed whoredoms in their youth: there were their breaſts preſſed, and there they bruiſed the teats of their virginity. 4. And the names of them *were*, Aholah the elder, and Aholibah her ſiſter: and they were mine, and they bare ſons and daughters: thus *were* their names, Samaria *is* Aholah, and Jeruſalem Aholibah. 5. And Aholah played the harlot when ſhe was mine, and ſhe doted on her lovers, on the Aſſyrians *her* neighbours, 6. *Which were* clothed with blue, captains and rulers, all of them deſirable young men, horſemen riding upon horſes. 7. Thus ſhe committed her whoredoms with them, with all them *that were* the choſen men of Aſſyria, and with all on whom ſhe doted, with all their idols ſhe defiled her ſelf. 8. Neither left ſhe her whoredoms *brought* from Egypt: for in her youth they lay with her, and they bruiſed the breaſts of her virginity, and poured their whoredom upon her. 9. Wherefore I have delivered her into the hand of her lovers, into the hand of the Aſſyrians, upon whom ſhe doted. 10. Theſe diſcovered her nakedneſs, they took her ſons and her daughters, and ſlew her with the ſword: and ſhe became famous among women, for they had executed judgment upon her.

God had often ſpoken to Ezekiel, and by him to the people, to this effect, but now his word *comes again*; for *God ſpeaketh* the ſame thing *once, yea twice*, yea many a time, and all little enough, and too little, for *man perceiveth it not.* Note, To convince ſinners of the evil of ſin, and of their miſery and danger by reaſon of it, there is need of *line upon line*, ſo loth we are to know the worſt by our ſelves. The ſinners that are here to be expoſed are *two women*, two kingdoms, ſiſter-kingdoms, Iſrael and Judah, *daughters of one mother*, having been for a long time but *one people:* Solomon's kingdom was ſo large, ſo populous, that immediately after his death it divided into two. Obſerve,

1. Their character when they were one, *ver.* 3. *They committed whoredoms in Egypt*, for there they were guilty of idolatry, as we read before, *chap.* xx. 8. The repreſenting of theſe ſins, which are moſt *provoking* to God, and moſt *ruining* to a people by the ſin of whoredom, plainly intimates what an exceeding ſinful ſin uncleanneſs is, how offenſive, how deſtructive. Doubtleſs it is itſelf one of the worſt of ſins, for other the worſt of ſins are compared to it here, and often elſewhere; which ſhould increaſe our deteſtation and dread of all manner of *fleſhly luſts*, all appearances of them, and approaches to them, as *warring againſt the ſoul*, infatuating ſinners, bewitching them, alienating their minds from God and all that is good, debauching conſcience, rendering them odious in the eyes of the pure and holy God, and drowning them at laſt in deſtruction and perdition.

2. Their names when they became two, *ver.* 4. The kingdom of Iſrael is called the *elder ſiſter*, becauſe that firſt made the breach, and ſeparated from the family both of kings and prieſts that God had appointed: the *greater ſiſter*, ſo the word is, for ten tribes belonged to that kingdom, and only two to the other. God ſaith of them both, *they were mine*, for they were the ſeed of Abraham *his friend*, and of Jacob *his choſen*; they were in covenant with God, and carried about with them the ſign of *their circumciſion*, the ſeal of the covenant. *They were mine,*

mine, and therefore their apoſtaſy was the higheſt injuſtice; it was alienating God's property, it was the baſeſt ingratitude to the beſt of beneſactors, and a perfidious treacherous violation of the moſt ſacred engagements. Note, Thoſe who have been in profeſſion the people of God, but revolted from him, have a great deal to anſwer for more than thoſe who never made any ſuch profeſſion. *They were mine, i. e.* they were eſpouſed to me, and to me *they bare ſons and daughters*; they were many among them that were devoted to God's honour, and employed in his ſervice, and were the ſtrength and beauty of theſe kingdoms, as children are of the families they are born in. In this parable Samaria and the kingdom of Iſrael ſhall bear the name of Aholah. *Her own tabernacle*; becauſe the places of worſhip, which that kingdom had, were of their own deviſing, their own chuſing, and the worſhip it ſelf their own invention; God never owned it: *her tabernacle to her ſelf*, ſo ſome render it, let her take it to her ſelf, and make her beſt of it. Jeruſalem and the kingdom of Judah bear the name of Aholibah. *My tabernacle is in her*, becauſe *their* temple was the place which God himſelf had *choſen*, to *put his name there*. He acknowledged it to be his, and honoured them with the tokens of his preſence in it. Note, Of thoſe that ſtand in relation to God, and make profeſſion of his name, ſome have greater privileges and advantages than others; and as thoſe who have greater, are thereby rendered the more *inexcuſable* if they revolt from God; ſo thoſe that have leſſer, yet will not thereby be rendred *excuſable*.

3. The treacherous departure of the kingdom of Iſrael from God, *ver.* 5. *Aholah played the harlot when ſhe was mine.* Though the ten tribes had deſerted the houſe of David, yet God owned them for *his* ſtill; then Jeroboam in ſetting up the golden calves *ſinned, and made Iſrael to ſin*, yet as long as they worſhipped the God of Iſrael only, though by images, he did not quite caſt them off. But the way of ſin is down-hill, Aholah played the harlot, brought in the worſhip of Baal, 1 *Kings* xvi. 31. ſet up that *other* god, that dunghil god, in competition with Jehovah, 1 *Kings* xviii. 21. as a vile adultereſs *dotes on her lovers*, becauſe they are well dreſſed, and make a figure, becauſe they are young and handſome, *ver.* 6. *clothed with blue, captains and rulers, deſirable young* men, genteel, and that paſs for men of honour. So ſhe doted upon her neighbours, particularly the Aſſyrians, who had extended their conqueſts near them; ſhe admired their idols, and worſhipped them, admired the pomp of their courts, and their military ſtrength, and ccurted alliances with them upon any terms, as if their own God were not ſufficient to be depended upon. We find one of the kings of Iſrael giving a *thouſand talents* to the *kings of Aſſyria*, to engage him in his intereſts, 2 *Kings* xv. 19. She doted on the *choſen men of Aſſyria*, as worthy to be truſted and employed in the ſervice of the ſtate, (*ver.* 7.) and *on all their idols with which ſhe defiled her ſelf.* Note, Whatever creature we *dote upon*, pay homage to, and put a confidence in, we make an idol of that creature; and whatever we *make an idol* of, we *defile our ſelves with.* And now again, the conviction looks back as far as the original of their nation; *neither left ſhe her whoredoms which ſhe brought from Egypt*, ver. 9. Their being idolaters in Egypt, was a thing never to be forgotten; that they ſhould be *in love* with Egypt's idols, even then when they were continually *in fear* of Egypt's tyrants and taſk-maſters. But (as ſome have obſerved) therefore at that time, when Satan boaſted of his having *walked through the earth* as all his own, to diſprove his pretenſions God did not ſay, Haſt thou conſidered *my people Iſrael in Egypt?* for they were become idolaters, and were not to be bragged of, but, *Haſt thou conſidered my ſervant Job in the land of Uz?* And this corrupt diſpoſition in them, when they were firſt formed into a people, is an emblem of that original corruption which is born with us, and is woven into our conſtitution, a ſtrong bias towards the world and the fleſh, like that in the Iſraelites towards idolatry; it was *bred in the bone* with them, and was charged upon them long after, that they *left not their whoredoms brought from Egypt*, it would never *out of the fleſh*, though Egypt had been a houſe of bondage to them; thus the corrupt affections and inclinations which we brought into the world with us we have not loſt, nor got clear of, but ſtill retain them, though the iniquity we were born in, was the ſource of all the calamities which human life is liable to.

4. The deſtruction of the kingdom of Iſrael for their apoſtaſy from God, *ver.* 9, 10. *I have delivered her into the hand of her lovers.* God firſt juſtly gave her up to her luſt; *Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone*; and then gave her up *to her lovers.* The neighbour nations, whoſe idolatries ſhe had conformed to, and whoſe friendſhip ſhe had confided in, and in both had affronted God, are now made uſe of as the inſtruments of her deſtruction, The *Aſſyrians, on whom ſhe doted*, ſoon ſpied out the *nakedneſs of the land*; diſcovered her blind ſide on which to attack her, ſtripped her of all her ornaments, and all her defences, and ſo *uncovered* her, and *made her naked and bare*; carried her *ſons and daughters* into captivity, *ſlew her with the ſword*, and quite deſtroyed that kingdom, and put an end to it. We have the ſtory at large, 2 *Kings* xvii. 6, *&c.* where the cauſe of the ruin of that once flouriſhing kingdom by the Aſſyrians, is ſhewed to be their forſaking the God of Iſrael, *fearing other gods*, and *walking in the ſtatutes of the heathens*; it was for this that God was very *angry with them, and removed them out of his ſight*, ver. 18. And that the Aſſyrians, whom they had been ſo fond of, ſhould be employed in *executing judgments* upon them was very remarkable, and ſhews how God doth often in a way of righteous judgment, make that a ſcourge to ſinners, which they have inordinately ſet their hearts upon. The Devil will for ever be a tormenter to thoſe impenitent ſinners, who now hearken to him, and comply with him as a tempter.

Thus Samaria became *famous among women*, or *infamous* rather; ſhe *became a name*, ſo the word is; not only ſhe came to be the ſubject of diſcourſe, and much talked of, as the deſolations of cities and kingdoms fill the news-papers. But ſhe was thus ruined for her idolatries *in terrorem*, for warning to all people to take heed of doing likewiſe. As the publick execution of notorious malefactors makes them ſuch *a name*, ſuch an ill name as may ſerve to frighten others from thoſe wicked courſes which have brought them to a miſerable and ſhameful end. Deut. xxi. 21. *All Iſrael ſhall hear and fear.*

11. And when her ſiſter Aholibah ſaw *this*, ſhe was more corrupt in her inordinate love than ſhe, and in her whoredoms more than her ſiſter in *her* whoredoms. 12. She doted upon the Aſſyrians *her* neighbours, captains and rulers clothed moſt gorgeouſly, horſemen riding upon horſes, all of them deſirable young men. 13. Then I ſaw that ſhe was defiled, *that* they *took* both one way. 14. And *that* ſhe increaſed her whoredoms: for when ſhe ſaw men pourtrayed upon the wall, the images of the Chaldeans pourtrayed with vermilion, 15. Girded with girdles upon their loins, exceeding in dyed attire upon their head: all of them princes to look to, after the manner of the Babylonians of Chaldea, the land of their nativity: 16. And aſſoon as ſhe ſaw them with her eyes, ſhe doted upon them, and ſent meſſengers unto them into Chaldea. 17. And the Babylonians came to her into the bed of love, and they defiled her with their whoredom, and ſhe was polluted with them, and her mind was alienated from them. 18. So ſhe diſcovered her whoredoms, and diſcovered her nakedneſs: then my mind was alienated from her, like as my mind was alienated from her ſiſter. 19. Yet ſhe multiplied her whoredoms, in calling to remembrance the days of her youth, wherein ſhe had played the harlot in the land of Egypt. 20. For ſhe doted upon their paramours, whoſe fleſh *is as* the fleſh of aſſes, and whoſe iſſue *is like* the iſſue of horſes. 21. Thus thou calledſt to remembrance the lewdneſs of thy youth, in bruiſing thy teats by the Egyptians, for the paps of thy youth.

The prophet Hoſea in his time obſerved that the two tribes retained their integrity in a great meaſure, when the ten tribes had apoſtatiſed, *Hoſ.* xi. 12. *Ephraim indeed compaſſeth me about with lies, but Judah yet rules with God, and is faithful with the ſaints*, and this was juſtly expected from them, *Hoſ.* iv. 15. *Though thou Iſrael play the harlot, yet let not Judah offend.* But this laſted not long; by ſome unhappy matches made between the houſe of David and the houſe of Ahab, the worſhip of Baal had been brought into the kingdom of Judah; but had been by the reforming kings worked out again; and at the time of the captivity of the ten tribes, which was in the reign of Hezekiah, things were in a good poſture: but it laſted not long, in the reign of Manaſſeh, ſoon after the kingdom of Judah had *ſeen* the deſtruction of the kingdom of Iſrael, they became *more corrupt* than Iſrael had been in *their inordinate love* of idols, *ver.* 11. Inſtead of being made better by the warning which that deſtruction gave them, they were made worſe by it, as if they were *diſpleaſed, becauſe the Lord had made that breach upon Iſrael*; and for that reaſon became *diſaffected* to him, and to his ſervice; inſtead of being made to ſtand in awe of him as a *jealous God*, they therefore grew ſtrange to him, and liked thoſe gods better that would admit of partners with them. Note, Thoſe may juſtly expect God's judgments upon themſelves, who do not take warning by his judgments upon others; who ſee in others what is the end of ſin, and yet continue to make a light matter of it. But it is bad indeed with thoſe who are made worſe by that which ſhould make them better; and have their luſts irritated and exaſperated by that which was deſigned to ſuppreſs and ſubdue them. Jeruſalem grew worſe *in her whoredoms*, than her ſiſter Samaria had been *in her whoredoms.* This was obſerved before, *chap.* xvi. 51. *Neither hath Samaria committed half of thy ſins.*

1. Jeruſalem, that had been a *faithful city*, *became a harlot*, Iſa. i. 21. She alſo *doted upon the Aſſyrians*, ver. 12. joined in league

league with them, joined in worſhip with them; grew to be in love with their *captains and rulers*, and cried up them as finer and more accompliſhed gentlemen than any that ever the land of Iſrael produced; ſee how richly, how neatly they are dreſſed, *clothed moſt gorgeouſly*; how well they ſit a horſe, they are *horſemen riding on horſes*; how charmingly they look, *all of them deſirable young men*. And thus they grew to affect every thing that was *foreign*, and to deſpiſe their own nation, and even the religion of it was *mean* and *homely*, and not to be compared with the curioſity and gaiety that was in the heathen temples. Thus ſhe *increaſed her whoredoms*; ſhe fell in love, fell in league, with the Chaldeans; Hezekiah himſelf was faulty this way, when he was proud of the court which the king of Babylon made to him, and complimented his ambaſſadors with the ſight of all his treaſures, *Iſa.* xxxix. 2. And the humour increaſed, *ver.* 14. ſhe doted upon the pictures of the Babylonian captains, *ver.* 15, 16. joined in alliance with that kingdom, invited them to come and ſettle in Jeruſalem, that they might refine the genius of the *Jewiſh nation*, and make it more polite; nay, they ſent for patterns of their images, altars, and temples, and made uſe of them in their worſhip; thus was ſhe *polluted with their whoredoms*, ver. 17. and thereby ſhe *diſcovered her own whoredom*, ver. 18. *i. e.* her own ſtrong inclination to idolatry. And when ſhe had had enough of the Chaldeans, and grew ſick of them, and diſpoſed to break her league with them, as Jehoiakim and Zedekiah did, *her mind being alienated from them*, ſhe courted the *Egyptians*, *doted upon their parſimony*, ver. 20. would come into an alliance with them, and to ſtrengthen the alliance would join with them in their idolatries, and then depend upon them to be their protectors from all other nations; for ſo wiſe, ſo rich, ſo ſtrong, was the Egyptian nation, and came to ſuch perfection in idolatry, that there is no nation now they can take ſuch ſatisfaction in as in Egypt. Thus they *called to remembrance the days of their youth*, ver. 19. the *lewdneſs of their youth*, ver. 21. *i. e.* (1.) They *pleaſed themſelves* with the *remembrance* of it. When they began to ſet their affections upon Egypt, they encouraged themſelves to put a confidence in that kingdom, becauſe of the old acquaintance they had with it, as if they ſtill retained the guſt and reliſh of the *leeks and onions* they eat there; or rather of the idolatrous worſhip they learned there, and brought up with them from thence; when they began an acquaintance with Egypt they remembred how *merrily* their fathers worſhipped the golden calf, what muſick and dancing they had at that ſport, which they learned in Egypt; and hoped they ſhould now have a fair pretence to come to that again. Thus *ſhe multiplied her whoredoms*, repeated her former whoredoms, and encouraged herſelf to cloſe with *preſent* temptations, by *calling to remembrance the days of her youth*. Note, Thoſe, who inſtead of reflecting upon their former ſins with ſorrow and ſhame, reflect upon them with pleaſure and pride, contract new guilt thereby, ſtrengthen their own corruptions, and, in effect, bid defiance to repentance. This is *returning with the dog to his vomit*. (2.) They called it *God's remembrance*, and *provoked* him to remember it againſt them. God had ſaid indeed that he would reckon with them for *the golden calf*, that *idol of Egypt*, Exod. xxxii. 34. But ſuch was his patience, that he ſeemed to have forgotten it, till they by their league now with the Egyptians againſt the Chaldeans, did, as it were, put him in mind of it, and in the day *when he viſits*, *he will now*, as he hath ſaid, *viſit for that*. It is very obſervable how this adultereſs changeth her lovers; ſhe dotes firſt on the Aſſyrians, then ſhe thought the Chaldeans finer, and courted them; after a while her mind was alienated from them, and ſhe thought the Egyptians more powerful, *ver.* 20. and ſhe muſt contract an intimacy with them; which ſhews the folly, (1.) Of *fleſhly luſts*; when they are indulged they grow *humourſome* and *fickle*, are ſoon *ſurfeited*, but never *ſatisfied*, they muſt have variety; and what is loved one day is loathed the next. *Unius adulterium matrimonium vocant*, ſaith Seneca. (2.) Of *idolatry*. Thoſe who think one God too little, will not think a hundred enow, but will ſtill be for trying more, as finding all inſufficient. (3.) Of ſeeking to creatures for help; we go from one to another, but are diſappointed in them all, and can never reſt till we have made the God of Iſrael our help.

2. The faithful God juſtly gives a bill of divorce to this now faithleſs city, that is *become a harlot*. His jealouſy ſoon diſcovered her leudneſs, *ver.* 13. *I ſaw that ſhe was defiled*, that ſhe was debauched, ſaw which way her inclination was, that the two *ſiſters both took one way*, and that Jeruſalem grew worſe than Samaria; for *if we ſtretch out our hand to a ſtrange god, ſhall not God ſearch this out?* No doubt he ſhall; and when he has found it, can he be pleaſed with it? No, *ver.* 18. *Then my mind was alienated from her, as it was from her ſiſter*. How could the pure and holy God any longer take delight in ſuch a leud generation. Note, Sin alienates God's mind from the ſinner, and juſtly, for it is the alienation of the ſinner's mind from God; but wo, and thouſand woes to thoſe from whom *God's mind is alienated*, for whom he *turns from* he will *turn againſt*.

22. ¶ Therefore, O Aholibah, thus ſaith the Lord GOD, Behold, I will raiſe up thy lovers againſt thee, from whom thy mind is alienated, and I will bring them againſt thee on every ſide; 23. The Babylonians, and all the Chaldeans, Pekod, and Shoa, and Koa, *and* all the Aſſyrians with them: all of them deſirable young men, captains and rulers, great lords and renowned, all of them riding upon horſes. 24. And they ſhall come againſt thee with chariots, wagons, and wheels, and with an aſſembly of people *which* ſhall ſet againſt thee buckler and ſhield, and helmet round about: and I will ſet judgment before them, and they ſhall judge thee according to their judgments. 25. And I will ſet my jealouſy againſt thee, and they ſhall deal furiouſly with thee: they ſhall take away thy noſe, and thine ears, and thy remnant ſhall fall by the ſword: they ſhall take thy ſons and thy daughters, and thy reſidue ſhall be devoured by the fire. 26. They ſhall alſo ſtrip thee out of thy clothes, and take away thy fair jewels. 27. Thus will I make thy lewdneſs to ceaſe from thee, and thy whoredom *brought* from the land of Egypt: ſo that thou ſhalt not lift up thine eyes unto them, nor remember Egypt any more. 28. For thus ſaith the Lord GOD, Behold, I will deliver thee into the hand *of them* whom thou hateſt, into the hand *of them* from whom thy mind is alienated. 29. And they ſhall deal with thee hatefully, and ſhall take away all thy labour, and ſhall leave thee naked and bare, and the nakedneſs of thy whoredoms ſhall be diſcovered, both thy lewdneſs and thy whoredoms. 30. I will do theſe *things* unto thee, becauſe thou haſt gone a whoring after the heathen, *and* becauſe thou art polluted with their idols. 31. Thou haſt walked in the way of thy ſiſter, therefore will I give her cup into thine hand. 32. Thus ſaith the Lord GOD, Thou ſhalt drink of thy ſiſters cup deep and large: thou ſhalt be laughed to ſcorn, and had in deriſion; it containeth much. 33. Thou ſhalt be filled with drunkenneſs and ſorrow, with the cup of aſtoniſhment and deſolation, with the cup of thy ſiſter Samaria. 34. Thou ſhalt even drink it, and ſuck *it* out, and thou ſhalt break the ſherds thereof, and pluck off thine own breaſts: for I have ſpoken *it*, ſaith the Lord GOD. 35. Therefore thus ſaith the Lord GOD, Becauſe thou haſt forgotten me, and caſt me behind thy back, therefore bear thou alſo thy lewdneſs, and thy whoredoms.

Jeruſalem ſtands indicted by the name of Aholibah, for that ſhe as a falſe traitor to her ſovereign Lord the God of Heaven, not having his fear before her eyes, but moved by the inſtigation of the Devil, had revolted from her allegiance to him, had compaſſed and imagined to ſhake off his government, had kept up a correſpondence, and joined in confederacy, with his enemies, and the pretenders to a deity, in contempt of his crown and dignity: to this indictment ſhe has pleaded, *Not guilty*, *I am not polluted*, *I have not gone after Baalim*. But it is found againſt her by the notorious evidence of the fact, and ſhe ſtands convicted of it, nor has any thing material to offer why judgment ſhould not be given, and execution awarded according to law. In theſe verſes therefore we have the ſentence.

1. Her old confederates muſt be her executioners; and thoſe whom ſhe had courted to be her leaders in ſin, are now to be employed as inſtruments of her puniſhment. *Ver.* 22. *I will raiſe up thy lovers againſt thee*; the Chaldeans, whom formerly thou didſt ſo much admire and covet an acquaintance with, but from whom *thy mind* is ſince *alienated*, and with whom thou haſt perfidiouſly broken covenant: they are called *thy lovers*, ver. 22. and yet *ver.* 28. *them whom thou hateſt*. Note, It is common for ſinful love ſoon to turn into hatred; as Amnon's to Tamar. Thoſe of headſtrong and unreaſonable paſſions are often very *hot againſt* thoſe perſons and things, that a little before they were as *hot for*. Fools run into extremes; nay, and wiſe men may ſee cauſe to change their ſentiments. And therefore as we ſhould rejoice and weep, as if we rejoiced not and wept not; ſo we ſhould love and hate as if we loved not, and hated not. *Ita ama tanquam oſurus*.

2. The execution to be done upon her is very terrible. Her enemies ſhall come againſt her *on every ſide*, ver. 22. Thoſe of the ſeveral nations that conſtituted the Chaldean army, *ver.* 23. all of them *great lords and renowned*, whoſe pomp and grandeur, and ſplendid appearance made them look the more *amiable*, when they came as friends to protect and patronize Jeruſalem; but the more *formidable* when they came to chaſtiſe its treachery, and aimed at no leſs than its ruin. (1.) They ſhall come with a great deal of military forces, *ver.* 24. with *chariots and waggons*, furniſhed

nished with all necessary provisions for a camp, with arms and ammunition, bag and baggage, with a vast army, and well armed. (2.) They shall have justice on their side; *I will set judgment before them*; they shall have right with them as well as might; for the king of Babylon had just cause to make war upon the king of Judah, because he had broken his league with him; and therefore they *shall judge thee*, not only according to God's judgments, as the instruments of his justice, to punish thee for the indignities done to him, but *according to their judgments*, according to the law of nations, to punish thee for thy perfidious dealings with them. (3.) They shall prosecute the war with a great deal of fury and resentment; being a war of revenge, *they shall deal with thee hatefully*, ver. 29. This will make the execution the more severe, that their swords will be dipped in poison. Thou *hatest them*, and they shall *deal hatefully* with thee; those that *hate* will be *hated*, and hatefully dealt with. (4.) God himself will lead them on, and his anger shall be mingled with theirs, *ver.* 25. *I will set my jealousy against thee*, that shall kindle this fire, and then *they shall deal furiously with thee*. If men deal never so hatefully, never so furiously with us, if we have God on our side we need not fear them, they can do us no real hurt. But if men deal furiously with us, and God set his jealousy against us too, what will become of us?

The particulars of the sentence here passed upon this notorious adulteress, are, (1.) That all she has shall be seized on. The *clothes* and the *fair jewels*, with which she had endeavoured to recommend herself to her lovers, these she shall be stripped of, *ver.* 26. All those things that were the ornaments of their state shall be taken away. *They shall take away all thy labour*, all that thou hast gotten by thy labour, and shall *leave thee naked and bare*, ver. 29. Both city and country shall be impoverished, and all the wealth of both swept away. (2.) That her children shall go into captivity; they shall *take thy sons and thy daughters*, and make slaves of them, *ver.* 25. for they are *children of whoredoms*, unworthy the dignities and privileges of Israelites, *Hos.* ii. 4. (3.) That she shall be stigmatized and deformed; they shall *take away thy nose and thine ears*; shall mark thee for a whore, and render thee for ever odious, *ver.* 25. This intimates the many cruelties of the Chaldean soldiers towards the Jews that fall into their hands; whom it is probable they used barbarously. Some will have this to be understood figuratively; and by the *nose* they think is meant the *kingly* dignity; and by the *ears*, that of the *priesthood*. (4.) That she shall be exposed to shame; *thy lewdness and thy whoredoms shall be discovered*, ver. 29. as when a malefactor is punished, all his crimes are ripped up, and repeated to his disgrace; what was secret then comes *to light*, and what was done *long since* is then called *to mind*. (5.) That she shall be quite cut off and ruined. The *remnant* of thy people that have escaped the famine and pestilence shall *fall by the sword*; and the residue of thy houses that have not been battered down about thy ears shall be *devoured by the fire*, ver. 25. And this shall be the end of Jerusalem.

3. Because she has trod in the steps of Samaria's sins, she must expect no other but Samaria's fate. It is common in giving judgment to have an eye to precedents, so has God in passing this sentence on Jerusalem, *ver.* 31, &c. *Thou hast walked in the way of thy sister*, notwithstanding the warning thou hast had given thee, by the fatal consequences of her wickedness, and therefore *I will give her cup*, her portion of miseries, *into thy hand*. The cup of the Lord's fury which will be to thee a *cup of trembling*. Now, (1.) This cup is said to be *deep and large*, and to *contain much*, ver. 32. abundance of God's wrath, and abundance of miseries, the fruits of that wrath. It is such a cup as that which we read of, *Jer.* xxv. 15, 16. The *cup* of divine vengeance holds a great deal, and so they will find into whose hand it shall be put. (2.) They shall be made to drink the very dregs of this cup, as the *wicked* are said to do, *Psal.* lxxv. 8. *Thou shalt drink it, and suck it out*, not because it is pleasant, but because it is forced upon thee, *ver.* 34. *thou shalt break the sherds thereof*, and *pluck off thine own breasts*, for indignation at the extreme bitterness of this cup, being *full of the fury of the Lord*, Isa. li. 20. as men in great anguish tear their hair, and throw every thing from them. Finding there is no remedy but it must be drank, for *I have spoken it saith the Lord God*, thou shalt have no manner of patience in the drinking of it. (3.) They shall be intoxicated by it, made sick, and be at their wits end, as men in drink are, staggering and stumbling and ready to fall, *ver.* 33. *Thou shalt be filled with drunkenness and sorrow*. Note, Drunkenness hath sorrow attending it to such a degree, that the utmost confusion and astonishment is here represented by it. Who would think that that which is such a force upon nature, such a scandal to it, which deprives men of their reason, disorders them to the last degree, and is therefore expressive of the *greatest misery*, should yet be with many a *beloved sin*; that they should damn their own souls, to distemper their own bodies? *Who has wo* and *sorrow* like them? *Prov.* xxiii. 29. (4.) Being so intoxicated they shall become as drunkards deserve to be, a laughing-stock to all about them, *ver.* 32. *Thou shalt be laughed to scorn, and had in derision*, ver. 32. as acting ridiculously in every thing thou goest about. When God is about to ruin a people he *makes their judges fools*, and *pours contempt on their princes*, Job xii. 17, 21.

4. In all this God will be justified, and by all this they will be reformed, and so the issue even of this will be God's glory and their good. (1.) They have been *bad*, very *bad*, and that justifies God in all that is brought upon them. *Ver.* 30. *I will do these things unto thee, because thou hast gone a whoring after the heathen*, and *ver.* 35. *Because thou hast forgotten me, and cast me behind thy back*. Note, Forgetfulness of God, and a contempt of him, of his eye upon us, and authority over us, is at the bottom of all our treacherous and adulterous departures from him. Therefore men *wander* after idols, because they *forget God*, and their obligations to him; nor could they look with so much desire and delight upon the baits of sin, if they did not first cast God *behind their back*, as not worthy to be regarded. And those who put such an affront upon God, how can they think but that it should turn upon themselves at last? *Therefore bear thou also thy lewdness and thy whoredoms*, i. e. thou shalt *suffer the punishment* of it, and thou alone must *bear the blame*. Men need no more to sink them than the weight of their own sins; and they, who will not part with their *lewdness* and their *whoredoms*, must *bear them*. (2.) They shall be *better*, much *better*, and this fire, tho' *consuming* on many, shall be *refining* to a remnant, *ver.* 27. *Thus will I make thy lewdness to cease from thee*. The judgments which were brought upon them by their sins parted between them and their sins, and taught them at length to say, *What have we to do any more with idols?* Observe, (1.) How *inveterate* the disease was; thy *whoredoms were brought from the land of Egypt*. Their disposition to idolatry was early and innate, their practice of it was ancient, and had gained a sort of prescription by long usage. (2.) How compleat the cure was notwithstanding; tho' it has taken root, yet it shall be made to cease, so that thou shalt not so much as *lift up thine eyes* to the idols again, nor *remember Egypt* with pleasure *any more*. They shall *avoid* the occasions of this sin, for they shall not so much as *look* upon an idol, lest their hearts should unawares *walk after their eyes*. And they shall abandon all inclinations to it; they shall *not remember Egypt*, i. e. they shall not retain any of that affection for idols, which they had from the very infancy of their nation. They got it through the corruption of nature in their bondage in Egypt, and lost it through the grace of God in their captivity in Babylon, which this was the blessed fruit of, even *the taking away of sin*; of *that* sin; so that whereas before the captivity, no nation (all things considered) was more impetuously bent upon idols and idolatry than they were, after that captivity no nation was more vehemently set against idols and idolatry than they were; insomuch that at this day the image-worship which is practised in the church of Rome confirms the Jews as much as any thing in their prejudices against the Christian religion.

36. ¶ The LORD said moreover unto me, Son of man, wilt thou judge Aholah and Aholibah? yea, declare unto them their abominations; 37. That they have committed adultery, and blood *is* in their hands, and with their idols have they committed adultery, and have also caused their sons whom they bare unto me, to pass for them through *the fire* to devour *them*. 38. Moreover, this they have done unto me: they have defiled my sanctuary in the same day, and have profaned my sabbaths. 39. For when they had slain their children to their idols, then they came the same day into my sanctuary to profane it; and lo, thus have they done in the midst of mine house. 40. And furthermore, that ye have sent for men to come from far, unto whom a messenger *was* sent, and lo they came, for whom thou didst wash thyself, paintedst thy eyes, and deckedst thyself with ornaments, 41. And satest upon a stately bed, and a table prepared before it, whereupon thou hast set mine incense and mine oyl. 42. And a voice of a multitude being at ease *was* with her, and with the men of the common sort *were* brought Sabeans from the wilderness, which put bracelets upon their hands, and beautiful crowns upon their heads. 43. Then said I unto *her that was* old in adulteries, Will they now commit whoredoms with her, and she *with them?* 44. Yet they went in unto her, as they go in unto a woman that playeth the harlot: so went they in unto Aholah and unto Aholibah the lewd women. 45. ¶ And the righteous men, they shall judge them after the manner of adulteresses, and after the manner of women that shed blood; because they *are* adulteresses, and blood *is* in their hands. 46. For thus saith the Lord GOD, I will bring up a company among them, and will give them to be removed and spoiled. 47. And the company shall stone them with stones, and dispatch them with their swords; they shall slay their sons and their daughters, and burn up their houses with fire. 48. Thus will I cause lewdness to cease out of the land, that all women may be

taught not to do after your lewdneſs. 49. And they ſhall recompenſe your lewdneſs upon you, and ye ſhall bear the ſins of your idols: and ye ſhall know that I *am* the Lord GOD.

After the ten tribes were carried into captivity, and that kingdom was made quite deſolate, the remains of it by degrees incorporated with the kingdom of Judah, and gained a ſettlement (many of them) in Jeruſalem; ſo that the *two ſiſters* were in effect become *one* again: And therefore in theſe verſes the prophet takes thoſe to task jointly who were thus conjoined. *Wilt thou judge Aholah and Aholibah* together? *ver.* 36. wilt thou go about to excuſe for them? Thou ſeeſt the matter is ſo bad as not to bear an excuſe. Or rather, thou ſhalt now be employed in God's name to *judge them*, chap. xx. 4. The matter is rather worſe than better ſince the union.

1. Let them be made to ſee the ſins they are guilty of, *declare unto them* openly and boldly *their abominations*.

(1.) They have been guilty of groſs idolatry, here called adultery; *with their idols they have committed adultery*, ver. 37. have broken their marriage-covenant with God; have luſted after the gratifications of a carnal ſenſual mind in the worſhip of God. This is the firſt and worſt of the *abominations* he is to charge them with.

(2.) They have committed the moſt barbarous murthers, in ſacrificing their children to Moloch, a ſin ſo unnatural, that they deſerve to hear of it upon all occaſions: *Blood is in their hands*, innocent blood, the blood of their own children, which they have *cauſed to paſs thro' the fire*, ver. 37. not that they might be *dedicated* to the idols, but that they might be *devoured*; a ſign they loved their idols better than that which was deareſt to them in the world.

(3.) They have profaned the *ſacred things*, with which God had dignified and diſtinguiſhed them. This *they have done unto me*, this indignity, this injury, *ver.* 38. Every contempt put upon that which is holy, reflects upon him who is the fountain of holineſs; and from a relation to whom whatever is called *holy* has its denomination. God had ſet up *his ſanctuary* among them, but they *defiled it*, by making it a houſe of merchandiſe, a den of thieves; nay, and much worſe, there they ſet up their idols and worſhipped them, and there they ſhed the blood of God's prophets. God had *revealed to them his holy ſabbaths*, but they *profaned* them, by doing all manner of ſervile work therein, or perhaps by ſports and recreations on that day, not only practiſed but allowed and encouraged by authority. They *defiled the ſanctuary*, on *the ſame day* that they *profaned the ſabbath*. To defile the ſanctuary was bad enough on *any day*, but to do it on *the ſabbath day* was an aggravation. We uſe to ſay, *the better day the better deed*, but here the better day the *worſe deed*. God takes notice of the circumſtances of ſin which add to the guilt. He ſhews, *ver.* 39. what was their profanation, both of the ſanctuary and of the ſabbath. *They ſlew their children*, and ſacrificed them *to their idols*, to the great diſhonour both of God and of the human nature; and then came *the ſame day*, their hands embrued with the blood of their children, and their clothes ſtained with it, to attend in *God's ſanctuary*, not to ask pardon for what they had done, but to preſent themſelves before him, as other Iſraelites did, expecting acceptance with him, notwithſtanding theſe villainies they were guilty of. As if God either did not know their wickedneſs, or did not hate it: Thus they *profaned the ſanctuary*, as if that were a protection to the worſt of malefactors; for thus they did *in the midſt of his houſe*. Note, It is a profanation of God's ſolemn ordinances, when thoſe that are groſsly and openly profane and vicious, impudently and impenitently ſo intrude upon the ſervices and privileges of them. *Give not that which is holy unto dogs. Friend, how cameſt thou in hither?*

(4.) They have courted foreign alliances, been proud of them, and repoſed a confidence in them. This alſo is repreſented by the ſin of *adultery*, for it was a departure from God, not only *to whom* alone they ought to *pay their homage*, and not to idols, but *in whom* alone they ought to *put their truſt*, and not in creatures. Iſrael was a *peculiar people*, muſt *dwell alone*, and not be *reckoned among the nations*, and they profane their crown, and lay their honour in the duſt, when they covet to be like them, or in *league* with them: But this they have now done; they have entred into ſtrict alliances with the Aſſyrians, Chaldeans, and Egyptians, the moſt renowned and potent kingdoms at that time; but they ſcorned alliances with the petty kingdoms and ſtates that lay near them, which yet might have been of more real ſervice to them. Note, Affecting an acquaintance and correſpondence with *great people*, has often been a ſnare to *good people*. Let us ſee how Jeruſalem courts her *high allies*, thinking thereby to make herſelf conſiderable.

1. She privately requeſted that a publick embaſſy might be ſent to her, *ver.* 40. you *ſent a meſſenger for men to come from far*. It ſeems then the neighbours had no deſire to come into a confederacy with Jeruſalem, but ſhe thruſt herſelf upon them, and ſent under hand to deſire them to court her. And *lo they came*. The wiſeſt and beſt may be drawn unavoidably into company and converſation with profane and wicked people; but it is no ſign either of wiſdom or goodneſs to covet an intimacy with ſuch, and to court it.

2. Great preparation was made for the reception of theſe foreign miniſters, for their publick entry, and publick audience; which is compared to the pains that an adultereſs takes to make herſelf look handſome. Jezebel-like thou *painteſt thy face*, and *deckeſt thyſelf with ornaments*, ver. 40. The king and princes made themſelves new clothes, fitted up the rooms of ſtate, beautified the furniture, and made it look freſh. Thou *ſateſt upon a ſtately bed*, ver. 41. a ſtately throne; *a table was prepared, whereon thou haſt ſet mine oil and mine incenſe*. This was either, (1.) A feaſt for the ambaſſadors, a noble treat, agreeable to the other preparations. There was *incenſe* to perfume the room, and *oil* to anoint their heads. Or, (2.) An altar already furniſhed for the ambaſſador's uſe in the worſhip of their idols; to let them know that the Iſraelites were not ſo ſtrait-laced, but that they could allow foreigners the free exerciſe of their religion among them, and furniſh them with chapels, yea and complimented them ſo far as to join with them in their devotions; tho' the law of their God was againſt it, yet they could eaſily *diſpenſe with themſelves* to oblige a friend. The *oil* and *incenſe* God calls his, not only becauſe it was the gift of his providence, but becauſe it ſhould have been offered at his altar; which was an aggravation of their ſin in ſerving idols, and idolaters with it. See *Hoſ.* ii. 8.

3. There was great joy at their coming, as if it were ſuch a bleſſing as never happened to Jeruſalem before, *ver.* 42. *A voice of a multitude being at eaſe was with her*: The people were very *eaſy*, for they thought themſelves very *ſafe* and *happy* now they had ſuch powerful allies; and therefore attended the ambaſſadors with loud *huzzas* and acclamations of joy. A great confluence of people there was to the court upon this occaſion. The *men of the common ſort* were there to grace the ſolemnity, and to increaſe the crowd; and *with them were brought Sabeans from the wilderneſs*: The margin reads it *drunkards from the wilderneſs*, that would drink healths to the proſperity of this grand alliance, and force them upon others, and be moſt noiſy in ſhouting upon this occaſion. Whoever they were, in honour of the ambaſſadors, they put *bracelets upon their hands, and beautiful crowns upon their heads*, which made the cavalcade appear very ſplendid.

4. God by his prophets warned them againſt making theſe dangerous leagues with foreigners, *ver.* 43. *Then ſaid I unto her that was old in adulteries*, that from the firſt was fond of leagues with the heathen, of matching with their families, *Judg.* iii. 6. and afterwards of making alliances with their kingdoms; and tho' often diſappointed therein would never be diſſuaded from it: This was the *adultery* ſhe was *old in*. I ſaid, *Will they now commit whoredoms with her, and ſhe with them?* Surely experience and obſervation will by this time have convinced both them and her, that an alliance between the nation of the Jews and a heathen nation, can never be for the advantage of either: They are *iron and clay* that will not mix, nor will God bleſs it or ſmile upon it. But it ſeems her being *old* in theſe *adulteries*, inſtead of weaning her from them, as one would expect, doth but make her the more impudent and inſatiable in them; for tho' ſhe was thus admoniſhed of the folly of it, *yet they went in unto her*, ver. 44. A bargain was ſoon clapped up, and a league made firſt with this, and then with the other foreign ſtate. Samaria did ſo, Jeruſalem did ſo, like *lewd women*. They could not reſt ſatisfied in the embraces of God's laws and care, and the aſſurances of protection he gave them; they could not think his covenant with them ſecurity enough. But they muſt by treaties and leagues, politick ones (they thought) and well concerted, throw themſelves into the arms of foreign princes, and put their intereſts under their protection. Note, Thoſe hearts go a whoring from God that take a complacency in the pomp of the world, and put a confidence in its wealth, and in an *arm of fleſh*, Jer. xvii. 5.

2. Let them be made to foreſee the judgments that are coming upon them for theſe ſins. *Ver.* 45. *The righteous men they ſhall judge them*. Some make the inſtruments of their deſtruction to be the *righteous men* that *ſhall judge them*. The Aſſyrians that deſtroyed Samaria, the Chaldeans that deſtroyed Jeruſalem, thoſe were comparatively *righteous*, had a ſenſe of juſtice between man and man, and *juſtly* reſented the treachery of the Jewiſh nation; however, they executed God's judgments, which we are ſure are all *righteous*. Others underſtand it of the prophets, whoſe office it was in God's name to *judge* them and paſs ſentence upon them. Or, we may take it as an appeal to all *righteous men*, to all that have a ſenſe of equity, they ſhall all judge concerning theſe cities, and agree in their verdict, that foraſmuch as they have been notoriouſly guilty of adultery and murther, and the guilt is national, that therefore they ought to ſuffer the pains and penalties, which by law are inflicted upon women in their perſonal capacity that *ſhed blood*, and are *adultereſſes*. *Righteous men* will ſay, why ſhould bloody filthy cities eſcape any better than bloody filthy perſons? *judge, I pray thee*, Iſa. v. iii.

This judgment being given by *the righteous men*, the *righteous God* will award execution. See here, (1.) What the execution will be, *ver.* 46, 47. The ſame as before, *ver.* 23, *&c.* and *ver.* 28, *&c.* God will *bring a company* of enemies *upon them*, who ſhall be made to ſerve his holy purpoſes, even then when they are ſerving their own ſinful appetites and paſſions. Theſe enemies ſhall eaſily prevail, for God will *give them* into their hands *to be removed and ſpoiled*; this company ſhall *ſtone them with ſtones* as malefactors;

malefactors; ſhall *ſingle them out*, and *diſpatch them with their ſwords*; and, as was ſometimes done in ſevere executions, witneſs that of Achan, they ſhall *ſlay their children and burn their houſes*. (2.) What will be the effects of it. (1.) Thus they ſhall ſuffer for their ſins, their *lewdneſs ſhall be recompenſed upon them*. ver. 49. and they ſhall *bear the ſins of their idols* as before, *ver*. 35. Thus God will aſſert the honour of his broken law, and injured government, and let the world know what a juſt and jealous God he is. (2.) Thus they ſhall be broken off from their ſins. *I will cauſe lewdneſs to ceaſe out of the land*, ver. 48. as before, *ver*. 27. The deſtruction of God's city, like the death of God's ſaints, ſhall do that for them which ordinances and providences before could not do, it ſhall quite take away their ſin; ſo that Jeruſalem ſhall riſe out of its aſhes a new lump, as gold comes out of the furnace, purified from its droſs. (3.) Thus other cities and nations will have fair warning given them to keep themſelves from idols; that *all women may be taught not to do after your lewdneſs*. This is the end of the puniſhment of malefactors, that they may be made examples to others, who will *ſee and fear, ſmite the ſcorner, and the ſimple will beware*. The judgments of God upon ſome are deſigned to *teach others*, and happy they who receive inſtruction from them, not to tread in the ſteps of ſinners, leſt they be taken in their ſnares. And thoſe who would be taught this, muſt *know God is the Lord*, ver. 49. that he is the governor of the world, a God that judgeth in the earth, and with whom there is *no reſpect of perſons*.

CHAP. XXIV.

Here are two ſermons in this chapter preached on a particular occaſion, and they are both from mount Sinai, the mount of terror, both from mount Ebal, the mount of curſes, both ſpeak the approaching fate of Jeruſalem. The occaſion of them was the king of Babylon's laying ſiege to Jeruſalem, and the deſign of them is to ſhew, that in the iſſue of that ſiege he ſhould be not only maſter of the place, but deſtroyer of it. (1.) *By the ſign of fleſh boiling in a pot over the fire, is ſhewed the miſeries that Jeruſalem ſhould ſuffer during the ſiege, and juſtly for her filthineſs*, ver. 1—14. (2.) *By the ſign of Ezekiel's not mourning for the death of his wife, is ſhewed that the calamities coming upon Jeruſalem were too great to be lamented, ſo great that they ſhould ſink down under them into a ſilent deſpair*, ver. 15—27.

1. AGain in the ninth year, in the tenth month, in the tenth *day* of the month, the word of the LORD came unto me, ſaying, 2. Son of man, Write thee the name of the day, *even* of this ſame day: the king of Babylon ſet himſelf againſt Jeruſalem this ſame day. 3. And utter a parable unto the rebellious houſe, and ſay unto them, Thus ſaith the Lord GOD, Set on a pot, ſet *it* on, and alſo pour water into it. 4. Gather the pieces thereof into it, *even* every good piece, the thigh, and the ſhoulder, fill *it* with the choice bones. 5. Take the choice of the flock, and burn alſo the bones under it, *and* make it boil well, and let them ſeethe the bones of it therein. 6. ¶ Wherefore thus ſaith the Lord GOD, Wo to the bloody city, to the pot whoſe ſcum *is* therein, and whoſe ſcum is not gone out of it; bring it out piece by piece, let no lot fall upon it. 7. For her blood is in the midſt of her, ſhe ſet it upon the top of a rock, ſhe poured it not upon the ground, to cover it with duſt: 8. That it might cauſe fury to come up to take vengeance: I have ſet her blood upon the top of a rock, that it ſhould not be covered. 9. Therefore thus ſaith the Lord GOD, Wo to the bloody city, I will even make the pile for fire great. 10. Heap on wood, kindle the fire, conſume the fleſh, and ſpice it well, and let the bones be burnt. 11. Then ſet it empty upon the coals thereof, that the braſs of it may be hot, and may burn, and *that* the filthineſs of it may be molten in it, *that* the ſcum of it may be conſumed. 12. She hath wearied *her ſelf* with lyes, and her great ſcum went not forth out of her: her ſcum *ſhall be* in the fire. 13. In thy filthineſs *is* lewdneſs: becauſe I have purged thee, and thou waſt not purged, thou ſhalt not be purged from thy filthineſs any more, till I have cauſed my fury to reſt upon thee. 14. I the LORD have ſpoken *it*, it ſhall come to paſs, and I will do *it*, I will not go back, neither will I ſpare, neither will I repent; according to thy ways, and according to thy doings ſhall they judge thee, ſaith the Lord GOD.

We have here,

1. The notice God gives to Ezekiel in Babylon, of Nebuchadnezzar's laying ſiege to Jeruſalem, juſt at the time when he was doing it, *ver*. 2. *Son of man*, take notice, *the king of Babylon* that is now abroad with his army thou knoweſt not where, *ſet himſelf againſt Jeruſalem, this ſame day*. It was many miles, it was many days journey, from Jeruſalem to Babylon; perhaps the laſt intelligence they had from the army was, that the deſign was upon Rabbah of the children of Ammon, and that the campaign was to be opened with the ſiege of that city. But God knew, and could tell the prophet, *this day*, at this time, Jeruſalem is inveſted, and the Chaldean army is ſet down before it. Note, As all times, ſo all places, even the moſt remote, are preſent with God, and under his view. He tells it the prophet, that the prophet might tell it the people, that ſo when it proved to be punctually true, as they would find by the publick intelligence in a little time, it might be a confirmation of the prophet's miſſion, and they might infer, that ſince he was right in his news, he was ſo in his predictions, for he owed both to the ſame correſpondence he had with heaven.

2. The notice which he orders him to take of it. He muſt enter it in his book, *memorandum*, that *in the ninth year* of Jehoiakim's captivity, (for thence Ezekiel dated, *chap*. i. 2. which was alſo the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign, for he began to reign when Jehoiakin was carried off) in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month, the king of Babylon laid ſiege to Jeruſalem; and the date here agrees exactly with the date in the hiſtory, 2 *Kings* xxv. 1. See how God revealeth things to his ſervants the prophets, eſpecially thoſe things which ſerve to confirm their word, and ſo to confirm their own faith. Note, It is good to keep an exact account of the date of remarkable occurrences, which may ſometimes contribute to the manifeſting of God's glory ſo much the more in them, and the explaining and confirming of ſcripture prophecies. *Known unto God are all his works*.

3. The notice which he orders him to give to the people thereupon, the purport of which is, that this ſiege of Jeruſalem now began will infallibly end in the ruin of it. This he muſt ſay *to the rebellious houſe*, to thoſe of them that were in Babylon, to be by them communicated to thoſe who were yet in their own land. A *rebellious* houſe will ſoon be a *ruinous* houſe.

1. He muſt ſhew them this by *a ſign*; for that ſtupid people needed to be taught as children are. The compariſon made uſe of is that of a *boiling pot*. This agrees with Jeremiah's viſion, many years before, when he firſt began to be a prophet, and probably was deſigned to put them in mind of that, *Jer*. i. 13. *I ſee a ſeething pot, with the face towards the north*, and the explanation of it, *ver*. 15. makes it to ſignify the beſieging of Jeruſalem by the *northern* nations. And as this compariſon is intended to confirm Jeremiah's viſion, ſo alſo to confront the vain confidence of the princes of Jeruſalem, who had ſaid, *chap*. xi. 3. *This city is the caldron, and we are the fleſh*, meaning we are as ſafe here as if we were ſurrounded with walls of braſs: well, ſaith God, It ſhall be ſo, you ſhall be boiled in Jeruſalem, as the *fleſh in the caldron*, boiled to pieces; let the pot be ſet on with water in it, *ver*. 4. let it be filled with the fleſh of the *choice of the flock*, ver. 5. with the choice pieces, *ver*. 4. and the marrow-bones: and let the other bones ſerve for fuel, that, one way or other, either in the pot, or under it, the whole beaſt may be made uſe of. A fire of bones, tho' it be a ſlow fire, for the ſiege was to be long, yet it is a ſure and laſting fire; ſuch was God's wrath againſt them, and not like the *crackling of thorns under a pot*, which has noiſe and blaze, but no intenſe heat. They that from all parts of the country fled into Jeruſalem for ſafety would be ſadly diſappointed, when the ſiege laid to it would ſoon make the place *too hot for them*; and yet there was no getting out of it, but they muſt be forced to abide by it, as the fleſh in *a boiling pot*.

2. He muſt give them a comment upon this ſign. It is to be conſtrued as a *wo to the bloody city*, ver. 6. And again, *ver*. 9. being *bloody*, let it *go to pot* to be boiled, it is the fitteſt place for it. Let us here ſee,

1. What is *the courſe God takes with it*. Jeruſalem during the ſiege is like a pot boiling over the fire, all in a heat, all in a hurry. (1.) Care is taken to keep a good fire under the pot, which ſignifies the cloſeneſs of the ſiege, and the many vigorous attacks made upon the city by the beſiegers, and eſpecially the continued wrath of God burning againſt them; *ver*. 9. *I will make the pile for fire great*. Commiſſion is given to the Chaldeans, *ver*. 10. to *heap on wood, and kindle the fire*; make Jeruſalem more and more hot to the inhabitants. Note, The fire which God kindles for the conſuming of impenitent ſinners ſhall never *abate*, much leſs *go out* for want of fuel. *Tophet has fire and much wood*, Iſa. xxx. 33. (2.) The meat as it is boiled is taken out, and given to the Chaldeans for them to feaſt upon. *Conſume the fleſh*, i. e. let it be throughly boiled, boiled to rags; *ſpice it well*, and make it ſavoury, for thoſe that will feed ſweetly upon it; *let the bones be burnt*, either the bones under the pot, let them be conſumed with the other fuel; or, as ſome think, the bones *in the pot*: let it boil ſo furiouſly, as that not only the fleſh may be ſodden, but even the

the bones ſoftened; let all the inhabitants of Jeruſalem be, by ſickneſs, ſword, and famine, reduced to the extremity of miſery. And then, *ver.* 6. *Bring it out piece by piece*, let every man be delivered into the enemy's hand, to be either put to the ſword, or made a priſoner: let them be an eaſy prey to them, and let the Chaldeans fall upon them as eagerly as a hungry man doth upon a good diſh of meat when it is ſet before him. *Let no lot fall upon it*; every piece in the pot ſhall be fetched out and devoured firſt or laſt, and therefore it is no matter for caſting lots, which ſhall be fetched out firſt. It was a very ſevere military execution, when David meaſured Moab with *two lines to put to death, and one full line to keep alive*, 2 Sam. viii. 2. But here is *no line*, no lot of mercy, made uſe of; all goes one way, and that is to *deſtruction*. (3.) When all the broth is boiled away, the pot is ſet empty upon the coals, that it may burn to, which ſignifies the ſetting the city on fire, *ver.* 11. The ſcum of the meat, or, as ſome tranſlate it, the ruſt of the metal is ſo got into the pot, that there is no making it clean by waſhing or ſcouring it, and therefore it muſt be done by fire; ſo let the filthineſs be burnt out of it, or rather *molten in it*, and burnt with it. Let the vipers and their neſt be conſumed together.

2. What is *the quarrel God has with it*. He would not take theſe ſevere methods with Jeruſalem, but that he is provoked to it; ſhe deſerves to be thus dealt with: For,

1. It is a *bloody city*, ver. 7, 8. *Her blood is in the midſt of her.* Many a barbarous murder has been committed in the very heart of the city; nay, and they have a diſpoſition to cruelty in their hearts; they inwardly delight in blood-ſhed, and ſo it is *in the midſt of them.* Nay, they commit their murthers in the face of the ſun, and openly and impudently avow them, in defiance of the juſtice both of God and man. She did not *pour out* the blood ſhe ſhed *upon the ground to cover it with duſt*, as being *aſhamed* of the ſin, or *afraid* of the puniſhment. She did not look upon it as a *filthy* thing, fit to be concealed, *Deut.* xxiii. 13. much leſs dangerous. Nay, ſhe poured out the innocent blood ſhe ſhed *upon a rock*, where it would not ſoak in, upon *the top* of a rock, in deſpite of divine views and vengeance. They ſhed innocent blood under colour of juſtice; ſo that they gloried in it, as if they had done God and the country good ſervice, ſo put it, as it were, *on the top of a rock*; or it may refer to the ſacrificing of their children on their high places, perhaps on the top of rocks. Now thus they *cauſed fury to come up and take vengeance*, ver. 8. It could not be avoided, but that God *muſt* in anger *viſit for theſe things, his ſoul muſt be avenged on ſuch a nation as this.* If ſuch impudent murtherers as theſe, that even dare divine vengeance, go unpuniſhed, it will be ſaid that God has *forſaken the earth.* It is abſolutely neceſſary, that ſuch a bloody city as this ſhould have blood given her to drink, for ſhe is worthy, for the vindicating of the honour of divine juſtice. And the crime having been publick and notorious, it is fit the puniſhment ſhould be ſo too. *I have ſet her blood on the top of a rock.* Jeruſalem was to be made an *example*, and therefore was *made a ſpectacle* to the world; God dealt with her according to the law of retaliation. Thoſe that *ſin before all*, it is fit they ſhould be *rebuked before all*; and that their reputation ſhould not be conſulted by the concealment of their puniſhment, who were ſo impudent as not to deſire the concealment of their ſin.

2. It is a *filthy city*. Great notice is taken in this reddition of the compariſon, of the *ſcum of this pot*, which ſignifies the ſin of Jeruſalem, working up and appearing when the judgments of God were upon her. It is the pot *whoſe ſcum is therein*, and *is not gone out of it*, ver. 6. The *great ſcum* that *went not forth out of her*, ver. 12. that ſtuck to the pot when all was boiled away, and was *molten in it*, ver. 11. ſome of this runs over *into the fire*, ver. 12. inflames that, and makes it burn the more furiouſly, but *it ſhall all be conſumed* at laſt, *ver.* 11. When the hand of God was gone out againſt them, inſtead of humbling themſelves under it, repenting and reforming, and accepting the puniſhment of their iniquity, they grew more impudent and outrageous in ſin; quarrelled with God, perſecuted his prophets, were fierce to one another, enraged to the laſt degree againſt the Chaldeans, ſnarled at the ſtone, gnawed their chain, and were like a wild bull in a net: This was *their ſcum*; in their diſtreſs they *treſpaſſed yet more againſt the Lord*; like *that king Ahaz*, 2 Chron. xxviii. 22. There is little hopes of thoſe who are made worſe, by that which ſhould make them better; whoſe corruptions are excited and exaſperated by thoſe rebukes both of the word and of the providence of God, which were deſigned for the ſuppreſſing and ſubduing of them. Nor of thoſe whoſe ſcum *boiled up* once in convictions and confeſſions of ſin, as if it would be *taken off* by reformation, but afterwards returned again, in a revolt from their good overtures; and the heart that ſeemed ſoftned is hardned again.

This was Jeruſalem's caſe, *ſhe has wearied with lies*, wearied *her God* with purpoſes and promiſes of amendment, which ſhe never ſtood to, *wearied her ſelf* with her carnal confidences, which have all deceived her, *ver.* 12. Note, Thoſe that follow after lying vanities weary themſelves with the purſuit. Now ſee her doom, *ver.* 13, 14. Becauſe ſhe is incurably wicked, ſhe is abandoned to ruin without remedy. (1.) Methods and means of reformation had been tried in vain, *ver.* 13. *In thy filthineſs is lewdneſs*, i. e. Thou art become obſtinate and impudent in it; thou haſt got a habit of it, which is confirmed by frequent acts. *In thy filthineſs* there is a rooted leudneſs; as appears by this, *I have purged thee, and thou waſt not purged.* I have given thee purging phyſick, but it has not worked; I have uſed the means of cleanſing thee, but they have been ineffectual; the intention of them has not been anſwered. Note, It is ſad to think how many there are on whom ordinances and providences are all loſt. (2.) It is therefore reſolved, that no more ſuch methods ſhall be uſed. *Thou ſhalt not be purged from thy filthineſs any more.* The fire ſhall no longer be a *refining* fire, but a *conſuming* fire, and therefore ſhall not be mitigated and ſhortned, as it has been, but ſhall be continued in extremity, till it has done its deſtroying work. Note, Thoſe that will not be healed are juſtly *given up*, and their caſe adjudged deſperate. There is a day coming when it will be ſaid, *He that is filthy, let him be filthy ſtill.* (3.) Nothing remains then but to bring them to utter ruin. *I will cauſe my fury to reſt upon thee*: this is the ſame with what is ſaid of the later Jews, that *wrath is come upon them to the uttermoſt*, 1 Theſ. ii. 16. They deſerve it, *according to thy doings they ſhall judge thee*, ver. 14. And God will do it. The ſentence is bound on with repeated ratifications, that they might be awakened to ſee how certain their ruin was, *I the Lord have ſpoken it*, who am able to make good what I have ſpoken, *it ſhall come to paſs*, nothing ſhall prevent it, for *I will do it* my ſelf, *I will not go back* upon any intreaties, the decree is gone forth, and *I will not ſpare*, in compaſſion to them, *neither will I repent.* He will neither change his mind, nor change his way. Hereby the prophet was forbidden to intercede for them, and they were forbidden to flatter themſelves with hopes of an eſcape. God hath ſaid it, and he will do it. Note, The declarations of God's wrath againſt ſinners are as inviolable as the aſſurances he hath given of favour to his people; and the caſe of ſuch is ſad indeed, who have brought it to this iſſue, that either God muſt be *falſe*, or they muſt be *damned.*

15. ¶ Alſo the word of the LORD came unto me, ſaying, 16. Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the deſire of thine eyes with a ſtroke: yet neither ſhalt thou mourn nor weep, neither ſhall thy tears run down. 17. Forbear to cry, make no mourning for the dead, bind the tire of thine head upon thee, and put on thy ſhoes upon thy feet, and cover not *thy* lips, and eat not the bread of men. 18. So I ſpake unto the people in the morning, and at even my wife died; and I did in the morning as I was commanded. 19. ¶ And the people ſaid unto me, Wilt thou not tell us what theſe *things are* to us, that thou doſt *ſo?* 20. Then I anſwered them, The word of the LORD came unto me, ſaying, 21. Speak unto the houſe of Iſrael, Thus ſaith the Lord GOD, Behold, I will profane my ſanctuary, the excellency of your ſtrength, the deſire of your eyes, and that which your ſoul pitieth; and your ſons and your daughters whom ye have left ſhall fall by the ſword. 22. And ye ſhall do as I have done: ye ſhall not cover *your* lips, nor eat the bread of men. 23. And your tires *ſhall be* upon your heads, and your ſhoes upon your feet: ye ſhall not mourn nor weep, but ye ſhall pine away for your iniquities, and mourn one towards another. 24. Thus Ezekiel is unto you a ſign: according to all that he hath done ſhall ye do: and when this cometh, ye ſhall know that I *am* the Lord GOD. 25. Alſo thou ſon of man, *ſhall it* not *be* in the day when I take from them their ſtrength, the joy of their glory, the deſire of their eyes, and that whereupon they ſet their minds, their ſons and their daughters; 26. *That* he that eſcapeth in that day ſhall come unto thee, to cauſe *thee* to hear *it* with *thine* ears? 27. In that day ſhall thy mouth be opened to him which is eſcaped, and thou ſhalt ſpeak, and be no more dumb, and thou ſhalt be a ſign unto them, and they ſhall know that I *am* the LORD.

Theſe verſes conclude what we have been upon all along from the beginning of this book, to wit, Ezekiel's prophecies of the deſtruction of Jeruſalem; for after this, though he propheſied much concerning other nations, yet he ſaid no more concerning Jeruſalem, till he heard of the deſtruction of it, almoſt three years after, *chap.* xxxiii. 21. He had aſſured them in the former part of this chapter, that there was no hope at all of the preventing of the trouble: here he aſſures them that they ſhould not have the eaſe of weeping for it. Obſerve here,

1. The ſign by which this was repreſented to them, and it was a ſign that coſt the prophet very dear; the more ſhame for them, that when he, by a divine appointment, was at ſuch an expence to affect them with what he had to deliver, yet they were not affected by it.

(1.) He must lose a good wife, that should suddenly be taken from him by death. God gave him notice of it before, that it might be the less surprize to him, *ver.* 16. *Behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke.* Note, 1. A married state may very well agree with the prophetical office; it is *honourable in all*, and therefore not sinful in ministers. 2. Much of the comfort of human life lies in agreeable relations: no doubt Ezekiel found a prudent tender yoke-fellow, that shared with him in his griefs and cares, to be a happy companion in his captivity. 3. Those in the conjugal relation must be to each other not only a *covering of the eyes*, Gen. xx. 16. to restrain wandring looks after others; but a *desire of the eyes*, to engage pleasing looks on one another. A beloved wife is the *desire of the eyes*, which find not any object more grateful. 4. That is least safe which is most dear; we know not how soon *the desire of our eyes* may be removed from us, and may become the sorrow of our hearts; which is a good reason why those that *have wives* should be *as though they had none*; and those *who rejoice* in them, *as though they rejoiced not*, 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30. Death is *a stroke* which the most pious, the most useful, the most amiable, are not exempted from. 5. When the desire of our eyes is taken away with a stroke, we must see and own the hand of God in it. *I take away the desire of thine eyes.* He takes our creature-comforts from us when and how he pleaseth; he gave them to us, but reserved to himself a property in them, and *may he not do what he will with his own?* 6. Under afflictions of this kind, it is good for us to remember that we are *sons of men*; for so God calls the prophet here. If thou art a *son of Adam*, thy wife is a daughter of *Eve*, and therefore a dying creature. It is an affliction which the children of men are liable to, and *shall the earth be forsaken for us?* According to this prediction he tells us, *ver.* 18. *I spake unto the people in the morning*; for God sent his prophets *rising up early*, and sending them; then he thought, if ever, they would be disposed to hearken to him. Observe, (1.) Though God had given Ezekiel a certain prospect of this affliction coming upon him, yet it did not take him off from his work, but he resolved to go on in that. (2.) We may the easier bear an affliction, if it find us in the way of our duty; for nothing can hurt us, nothing come amiss to us, while we keep our selves in the love of God.

(2.) He must deny himself the satisfaction of mourning for his wife, which would have been both an honour to her, and an ease to the oppression of his own spirit. He must not use the *natural* expressions of sorrow, *ver.* 16. He must not give vent to his passion by *weeping*, or letting *his tears run down*; though tears are a tribute due to the dead, and when the body is *sown*, it is fit it should thus be watered: but Ezekiel is not allowed to do this; though he thought he had as much reason to do it as any man, and would perhaps be evil thought of by the people, if he did it not. Much less might he use the *customary* formalities of manners: he must dress himself in his usual attire, must bind his turban on him, here called the *tire of his head*; must *put on his shoes*, and not go barefoot, as was usual in such cases; he must not *cover his lips*, not throw a veil over his face, as mourners were wont to do, *Lev.* xiii. 45. must not be of a *sorrowful countenance, appearing unto men to fast*, Mat. vi. 18. He must not *eat the bread of men*, nor expect that his neighbours and friends should send him in provisions, as usually they did in such cases, presuming the mourners had no heart to provide meat for themselves: but if it were sent he must not eat of it, but go on in his business as at other times. It could not but be sore against the grain to flesh and blood not to lament the death of one he loved so dearly, but so God commands, and *I did in the morning as I was commanded.* He appeared in publick in his usual habit, and looked as he used to do without any signs of mourning. (1.) Here there was something *peculiar*, and Ezekiel to make himself a sign to the people, must put a force upon himself, and exercise an extraordinary piece of self-denial. Note, Our dispositions must always submit to God's directions, and his command must be obeyed, even in that which is most difficult and displeasing to us. (2.) Tho' mourning for the dead be a duty, yet it must always be kept under the government of religion and right reason, and we must not *sorrow as those that have no hope*, nor lament the loss of any creature, even the most valuable, and that which we could worst spare, as if we had *lost our God*, or as if all our happiness were gone with it; and of this moderation in mourning, ministers, when it is their case, ought to be examples. We must at such a time study to improve the affliction, to accommodate our selves to it, and to get our acquaintance with the other world increased, by the removal of our dear relations, and learn with holy Job, *to bless the name of the Lord*, even when he *takes*, as well as when he *gives*.

2. The explication and application of this sign. The people enquired the meaning of it, *ver.* 19. *Wilt thou not tell us what these things are to us, that thou dost so?* They knew Ezekiel was a loving husband, that the death of his wife was a great affliction to him, and that he would not appear so unconcerned at it, but for some good reason, and for instruction to them, and perhaps were in hopes that it had a favourable signification, and gave them an intimation that God would now comfort them again according to the time he had afflicted them, and make them look pleasant again. Note, When we are enquiring concerning the things of God, our enquiry must be what those things are *to us?* What are we concerned in them? What conviction, what counsel, what comfort do they speak to us? Wherein do they reach our case?

Ezekiel gives them an answer *verbatim*, as he had received it from the Lord, who had told him what he must *speak to the house of Israel.*

(1.) Let them know, that as Ezekiel's wife was taken from him by a stroke, so would God take from them all that which was dearest to them, *ver.* 21. If this were *done to the green tree, what shall be done to the dry?* If a faithful servant of God was thus afflicted only for his trial, shall such a generation of rebels against God go unpunished? By this awakening providence, God shewed that he was in earnest in his threatnings, and inexorable. We may suppose Ezekiel prayed that, if it were the will of God, his wife might be spared to him, but God would not hear him; and should he be heard then in his intercessions for this provoking people? No, it is determined; *God will take away the desire of your eyes.* Note, The removal of others comforts should awaken us to think of parting with ours too, for *are we better than they?* We know not how soon the same cup, or a more bitter one, may be put into our hands, and should therefore weep with them that weep, as being our selves also in the body. God will *take away that which their soul pitieth*, i. e. of which they say, *what pity is it* that it should be cut off and destroyed. That *for which your souls are afraid*, so some read it, you shall lose that which you most dread the loss of. And what is that? (1.) That which was their *publick pride*, the temple; *I will profane my sanctuary*, by giving that into the enemy's hand to be plundered and burnt. This was signified by the death of a wife, a dear wife, to teach us, that God's sanctuary should be dearer to us, and more *the desire of our eyes* than any creature-comfort whatsoever. Christ's church, that is, *his* spouse should be *ours* too. Though this people were very corrupt, and had themselves profaned the sanctuary, yet it is called *the desire of their eyes.* Note, Many that are destitute of *the power of godliness*, yet are very fond of *the form* of it; and it is just with God to punish them for their hypocrisy by depriving them of that too. The sanctuary is here called the *excellency of their strength*; they had many strong-holds, and places of defence, but the temple excelled them all; it was the *pride of their strength*, i. e. they prided in it as their strength, that they were *the temple of the Lord*, Jer. vii. 4. Note, The church privileges that men are proud of are profaned by their sins, and it is just with God to profane them by his judgments. And with these God will take away (2.) That which was their *family pleasure*, which they looked upon with delight, *your sons and your daughters* (which are the dearer to you, because they are but a few *left of many*; the rest having perished by famine and pestilence) shall *fall by the sword* of the Chaldeans. What a dreadful spectacle would it be to see their own children, pieces, pictures, of themselves, whom they had taken such care and pains to bring up, and whom they loved as their own souls, sacrificed to the rage of the merciless conquerors! This, this was the punishment of sin.

(2.) Let them know that as Ezekiel wept not for his affliction, so neither should they weep for theirs. He must say, *Ye shall do as I have done*, ver. 22. *You shall not mourn or weep*, ver. 23. Jeremiah had told them the same, that men *shall not lament for the dead, nor cut themselves*, Jer. xvi. 6. not that there shall be any such merciful circumstance *without*, or any such degrees of wisdom and grace *within*, as shall mitigate and moderate the sorrow. But they *shall not mourn*; for, (1.) Their grief shall be so great, that they shall be quite overwhelmed with it, their passions shall *stifle* them, and they shall have no power to ease themselves by *giving vent* to it. (2.) Their calamities shall come so fast upon them, one upon the neck of another, that by long custom they shall be *hardened in their sorrows*, Job vi. 10. and perfectly *stupified*, and moped (as we say) with them. (3.) They shall not dare to express their grief, for fear of being deemed disaffected to the conquerors, who would take their lamentations as an affront and disturbance to their triumphs. (4.) They shall neither have hearts, nor time, nor money, wherewith to put themselves in mourning, and accommodate themselves with the ceremonies of grief: you will be so entirely taken up with solid *substantial* grief, that you will have no room for the *shadow of it.* (5.) Particular mourners, shall not need to distinguish themselves by *covering their lips*, and laying aside their ornaments, and *going bare-foot*; for it is well known every body is a mourner. (6.) There shall be none of that sense of their affliction and sorrow for it, which would help to bring them to repentance, but that only which shall drive them to despair; so it follows, *ye shall pine away for your iniquities*, with seared consciences, and reprobate minds, and *you shall mourn*, not to God in prayer and confession of sin, but *one towards another*, murmuring and fretting, and complaining of God, thus making their burthen heavier, and their wound more grievous, as impatient people use to do under their afflictions, by mingling their own passions with them.

3. An appeal to the event for the confirmation of all this, *ver.* 24. *When this cometh*, as it is foretold, when Jerusalem, which is this day besieged, is quite destroyed and laid waste, which now

you cannot believe will ever be, *then ye ſhall know that I am the Lord God*, who have given you this fair warning of it. Then you will remember that Ezekiel was *to you a ſign*. Note, Thoſe who regard not the threatnings of the word when they are *preached*, will be made to remember them when they are *executed*. Obſerve,

1. The great deſolation which the ſiege of Jeruſalem ſhould end in, *ver.* 25. *In that day*, that terrible day, when the city ſhall be broken up, *I will take from them*, (1.) That which they depended on, *their ſtrength*, their walls, their treaſures, their fortifications, their men of war, none ſhall ſtand them in ſtead. (2.) That which they boaſted of; the *joy of their glory*, that which they looked upon as moſt their glory, and which they moſt rejoiced in, the temple of their God, and the palaces of their princes. (3.) That which they delighted in; which was the *deſire of their eyes*, and on which they *ſet their minds*. Note, Carnal people ſet their minds upon that on which they can ſet their eyes; they look at, and dote upon the *things that are ſeen*; and it is their folly to *ſet their minds* upon that which they have no aſſurance of, and which may be taken from them in a moment. Prov. xxiii. 5. *Their ſons and their daughters* were all this, *their ſtrength, and joy, and glory*, and theſe ſhall go into captivity.

2. The notice that ſhould be brought to the prophet, not by revelation, as the notice of the ſiege was brought him, *ver.* 2. but in an ordinary way, *ver.* 26. *He that eſcapes in that day* ſhall, by a ſpecial direction of providence, *come to thee* to bring thee intelligence of it; which we find now done, *chap.* xxxix. 21. The ill news came ſlowly, and yet to Ezekiel and his fellow captives it came too ſoon.

3. The divine impreſſion which he ſhould be under upon the receiving of that notice, *ver.* 27. Whereas from this time to that, Ezekiel was thus far *dumb*, that he propheſied no more againſt the land of Iſrael, but againſt the neighbour nations, as we ſhall find in the following chapters, then he ſhall have orders given him to *ſpeak again to the children of his people*, chap. xxxiii. 2, 24. then *his mouth ſhall be opened*. He was ſuſpended from propheſying *againſt them* in the mean time, becauſe Jeruſalem being beſieged, his prophecies could not be ſent into the city; becauſe when God was ſpeaking ſo loud by the rod, there was the leſs need of ſpeaking by the word, and becauſe then the accompliſhments of his prophecies would be the full confirmation of his miſſion, and would the more effectually clear the way for him to begin again. It being referred to that iſſue, that iſſue muſt be waited for: thus Chriſt forbid his diſciples to preach openly, that he was Chriſt, till after his reſurrection, becauſe that was to be the full proof of it. But then *thou ſhalt ſpeak* with the greater aſſurance, and the more effectually, either to their conviction or to their confuſion. Note, God's prophets are never ſilenced, but for wiſe and holy ends. And when God gives them the opening of the mouth again, (as he will in due time; for even the witneſſes that are *ſlain* ſhall *ariſe*) it ſhall appear to have been for his glory that they were for a while ſilent, that people may the more certainly and fully *know* that *God is the Lord*.

CHAP. XXV.

Judgment began at the houſe of God, and therefore with them the prophets began, who were the judges, but it muſt not end there, *and therefore* they *muſt not. Ezekiel had finiſhed his teſtimony which related to the deſtruction of Jeruſalem. As to that he was ordered to ſay no more, but ſtand upon his watch-tower and wait the iſſue; and yet he muſt not be ſilent; there are divers nations bordering upon the land of Iſrael, which he muſt propheſy againſt, as Iſaiah and Jeremiah had done before; and muſt proclaim God's controverſy with them, chiefly for the injuries and indignities which they had done to the people of God, in the day of their calamity. In this chapter we have his propheſy,* (1.) *Againſt the Ammonites*, ver. 1—7. (2.) *Againſt the Moabites*, ver. 8—11. (3.) *Againſt the Edomites*, ver. 11—14. (4.) *Againſt the Philiſtines*, ver. 15—17. *That which is laid to the charge of each of them is their barbarous and inſolent carriage towards God's Iſrael; for which God threatens to put the ſame cup of trembling into their hand. God's reſenting it thus would be an encouragement to Iſrael to believe that though he had dealt thus ſeverely with them, yet he had not caſt them off, but would ſtill own them, and plead their cauſe.*

1. THE word of the LORD came again unto me, ſaying, 2. Son of man, ſet thy face againſt the Ammonites, and propheſy againſt them; 3. And ſay unto the Ammonites, Hear the word of the Lord GOD, Thus ſaith the Lord GOD, Becauſe thou ſaidſt, Aha, againſt my ſanctuary, when it was profaned, and againſt the land of Iſrael, when it was deſolate, and againſt the houſe of Judah, when they went into captivity; 4. Behold therefore, I will deliver thee to the men of the eaſt for a poſſeſſion, and they ſhall ſet their palaces in thee, and make their dwellings in thee: they ſhall eat thy fruit, and they ſhall drink thy milk. 5. And I will make Rabbah a ſtable for camels, and the Ammonites a couching-place for flocks: and ye ſhall know that I *am* the LORD. 6. For thus ſaith the Lord GOD, Becauſe thou haſt clapped *thine* hands, and ſtamped with the feet, and rejoiced in heart with all thy deſpite againſt the land of Iſrael: 7. Behold therefore, I will ſtretch out mine hand upon thee, and will deliver thee for a ſpoil to the heathen, and I will cut thee off from the people, and I will cauſe thee to periſh out of the countries: I will deſtroy thee, and thou ſhalt know that I *am* the LORD.

Here, 1. The prophet is ordered to addreſs himſelf to the Ammonites, in the name of *the Lord Jehovah*, the *God of Iſrael*, who is alſo the God of the whole earth. But what can Chemoſh the god of the children of Ammon ſay in anſwer to it? he is bidden to *ſet his face againſt the Ammonites*, for he is God's repreſentative as a prophet, and thus he muſt ſignify that God *ſet his face againſt them*, for *the face of the Lord is againſt them that do evil*, Pſal. xxxiv. 16. He muſt ſpeak with boldneſs and aſſurance, as one that knew whoſe errand he went upon, and that he ſhould be born out in delivering it. He muſt therefore *ſet his face as a flint*, Iſa. l. 7. He muſt ſhew his diſpleaſure againſt theſe proud enemies of Iſrael, and face them down, tho' they were very impudent; and thus muſt ſhew that tho' he had propheſied ſo much and ſo long *againſt Iſrael*, yet ſtill he was for Iſrael; and while he witneſſed againſt their corruptions, yet adhered to and gloried in God's covenant with them. Note, Thoſe are miſerable that have the preaching and praying of God's prophets againſt them; againſt whom *their faces* are *ſet*.

2. He is directed what to ſay to them. Ezekiel is now a captive in Babylon, and has been ſo many years, and knows little of the ſtate of his own nation, much leſs of the nations that were about it; but God tells him both what they were doing, and what he was about to do with them. And thus by the ſpirit of propheſy he is enabled to ſpeak as pertinently to their caſe as if he had been among them.

1. He muſt upbraid the Ammonites with their inſolent and barbarous triumphs over the people of Iſrael in their calamities, *ver.* 3. The Ammonites ſaid, when all went againſt the Jews, *Aha, ſo would we have it.* They were glad to ſee, (1.) The temple burned, *the ſanctuary profaned* by the victorious Chaldeans; this is put firſt, to intimate what was the cauſe of the controverſy; they had an enmity to the Jews for the ſake of their religion, tho' it was only ſome poor remains of the profeſſion of it, that were to be found among them. (2.) The nation ruined. They rejoiced when *the land of Iſrael was made deſolate*, the cities burnt, and the country waſted, and both depopulated, and when the houſe of *Judah went into captivity*. When they had not power to oppreſs God's Iſrael themſelves, they were pleaſed to ſee the Chaldeans oppreſs them; partly becauſe they envied their wealth and the good land they enjoyed, partly becauſe they feared their growing power, and partly becauſe they hated their religion, and the divine oracles they were favoured with. It is repeated again, *ver.* 6. *They clapped with their hands* to irritate the rage of the Chaldeans, and to ſet them on as dogs upon the game; or, they clapped their hands in triumph, attended this tragedy with their *plaudite*, thinking it *well acted*; never was there any thing more *diverting* or *entertaining* to them. They *ſtamped with their feet*, ready to leap and dance for joy upon this occaſion: they not only *rejoiced in heart*, but they could not forbear ſhewing it; tho' every one that had any ſenſe of honour and humanity would cry ſhame upon them for it. Eſpecially conſidering that they rejoiced thus, not for any thing they got by Iſrael's fall; if ſo, they had been the more excuſable. Moſt people are for themſelves. But this was purely from a principle of malice and enmity, *Thou haſt rejoiced in heart with all thy deſpite*, which ſignifies both ſcorn and hatred *againſt the land of Iſrael*. Note, The people of God have always had a great deal of ill will born them by this wicked world; and their calamities have been their neighbours entertainments. See to what unnatural inſtances of malice the enmity that is in the ſeed of the ſerpent againſt the ſeed of the woman will carry them. The Ammonites of all people ſhould not have rejoiced in Jeruſalem's ruin, but ſhould rather have trembled, becauſe they themſelves had ſuch a narrow eſcape at the ſame time; it was but croſs or pile which ſhould be beſieged firſt, Rabbah or Jeruſalem, *chap.* xxi. 20. And they had reaſon to think that the king of Babylon would ſet upon them next. But thus were their hearts hardened to their ruin, and their inſolence againſt Jeruſalem was to them an *evident token of perdition*, Phil. i. 28. It is a very wicked thing to be *glad at* the *calamities* of *any*, eſpecially of God's people, and a ſin that God will ſurely reckon for; ſuch delight has God in ſhewing mercy, and ſo backward is he to puniſh

punish, that nothing is more pleasing to him than to be stopped in the ways of his judgments by intercessions, nor any thing more provoking than to *help forward the affliction* when he is but *a little displeased*, Zech. i. 15.

2. He must threaten the Ammonites with utter ruin, for this insolence which they were guilty of; God turns away his wrath from Israel against them, as is said, *Prov.* xxiv. 17, 18. God is jealous for his people's honour, because his own is so nearly interested in it. And therefore they that touch that, shall be made to know they touch the apple of his eye. He had before predicted the destruction of the Ammonites, *chap.* xxi. 28. Had they repented, that had been revoked, but now it is ratified. (1.) A destroying enemy is brought against them; *I will deliver thee to the men of the east*, i. e. first to the Chaldeans, who came from the north-east, and whose army, under the command of Nebuchadnezzar, destroyed the country of the Ammonites, about five years after the destruction of Jerusalem; as Josephus relates, *Antiq. lib.* x. *cap.* 11. And then to the Arabians who were properly the *children of the east*, who when the Chaldeans had made the country desolate and quitted it, came and took possession of it for themselves, probably with the consent of the conquerors: shepherds tents were their palaces, these they set up in the country of the Ammonites, there they *made their dwellings*, ver. 4. They enjoyed the products of the country, *they shall eat thy fruit and drink thy milk*; and *the milk* from the cattle is *the fruit* of the ground at second hand: they made use even of the royal city, for their cattle, *ver.* 5. *I will make Rabbah*, that was a nice and splendid city, to be *a stable of camels*, for its new masters, whose wealth lies all in cattle, will not think they can put the palaces of Rabbah to a better use. Rabbah had been a habitation of brutish men, justly therefore is it now made a *stable of camels*; and the country a *couching-place for flocks*, more innocent beasts than those with which it had been before replenished. (2.) God himself acts as an enemy to them, *ver.* 7. *I will stretch out mine hand upon thee*, a hand that will reach far, and strike home; which there is no resisting the blow of, for it is a mighty hand, not bearing the weight of, for it is a heavy hand. God's *hand stretched out* against the Ammonites will not only deliver them *for a spoil to the heathen*, so that their neighbours shall prey upon them; but will *cut them off from the people*, and *make them perish out of the countries*, so that all there shall be no remains of them in that place. Compare with this, *Jer.* xlix 1, *&c.* What can sound more terrible than that resolution? *ver.* 7. *I will destroy thee*, for the almighty God is able both *to save and to destroy*, and it is *a fearful thing to fall into his hands*. Both the threatnings here, *ver.* 5, and *ver.* 7. conclude with this, *Ye shall know that I am the Lord*. For, (1.) Thus God will maintain his own honour, and will make it appear that he is the God of Israel, tho' he suffers them for a time to be captives in Babylon. (2.) Thus he will bring those that were strangers to him into an acquaintance with him, and it will be a blessed effect of their calamities. Better know God and be poor, than be rich and ignorant of him.

8. ¶ Thus saith the Lord GOD, Because that Moab and Seir do say, Behold the house of Judah *is* like unto all the heathen: 9. Therefore behold, I will open the side of Moab from the cities; from his cities *which are* on his frontiers, the glory of the country Beth-jeshinoth, Baal-meon, and Kiriathaim, 10. Unto the men of the east with the Ammonites, and will give them in possession, that the Ammonites may not be remembred among the nations. 11. And I will execute judgments upon Moab, and they shall know that I *am* the LORD. 12. ¶ Thus saith the Lord GOD, Because that Edom hath dealt against the house of Judah by taking vengeance, and hath greatly offended, and revenged himself upon them: 13. Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, I will also stretch out mine hand upon Edom, and will cut off man and beast from it, and I will make it desolate from Teman, and they of Dedan shall fall by the sword. 14. And I will lay my vengeance upon Edom by the hand of my people Israel, and they shall do in Edom according to mine anger, and acccording to my fury, and they shall know my vengeance, saith the Lord GOD. 15. ¶ Thus saith the Lord GOD, Because the Philistines have dealt by revenge, and have taken vengeance with a despiteful heart, to destroy *it* for the old hatred; 16. Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I will stretch out mine hand upon the Philistines, and I will cut off the Cherethims, and destroy the remnant of the sea-coast. 17. And I will execute great vengeance upon them with furious rebukes; and they shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I shall lay my vengeance upon them.

Three more of Israel's *ill-natured* neighbours are here arraigned, convicted, and condemned to destruction, for contributing to, and triumphing in, Jerusalem's fall.

1. The Moabites. Seir, which was the seat of the Edomites, is joined with them, *ver* 5. because they said the same that the Moabites, but they were afterwards reckoned with by themselves, *ver.* 12. Now observe, (1.) What was the sin of the Moabites, they said, *Behold, the house of Judah is like unto all the heathen.* They triumphed, 1. In the apostasies of Israel, were pleased to see them forsake their God, and worship idols, and hoped in a while their religion would be quite lost and forgotten, and the *house of Judah* would be *like all the heathen*, perfect idolaters. When those that profess religion walk unworthy of their profession, they encourage the enemies of religion to hope that it will in time sink and be run down and quite abandoned; but let the Moabites know that tho' there are those of the house of Judah who have made themselves *like the heathen*, yet there is a remnant that retain their integrity, the religion of the house of Judah shall recover it self, its peculiarities shall be preserved, it shall not lose it self *among the heathen*, but distinguish it self from them, till it deliver it self honourably into a better institution. 2. They triumphed in the calamities of Israel. They said, *The house of Judah is like all the heathen*, in as ill a state as they; their God is no more able to deliver them from this *overflowing scourge* of these parts of the world than the gods of the heathen are to deliver them. Where are the promises they gloried in, and all the wonders which they and their fathers told us of? What the better are they for the covenant of peculiarity, upon which they so much valued themselves? They that looked with so much scorn upon *all the heathen*, are now set upon a level with them, or rather sunk below them. Note, Those who judge only by outward appearance are ready to conclude that the people of God have lost all their privileges, when they have lost their worldly prosperity; which doth not follow, for good men even in affliction, in captivity *among the heathen*, yet have graces and comforts within, sufficient to *distinguish* them from *all the heathen*. Tho' the *event* seem one to the *righteous and wicked*, yet indeed it is vastly different. (2.) What should be the punishment of Moab for this sin; because they triumphed in the overthrow of Judah, their country shall be in like manner overthrown with that of the Ammonites, who were guilty of the same sin, *ver.* 9, 10. *I will open the side of Moab*, will uncover its shoulder, will take away all it defences, that it may become an easy prey to any that will make a prey of it. (1.) See here how it shall be exposed; the frontier towns, that were its strength and guard, shall be demolished by the Chaldean forces, and laid open. Some of the cities are here named, which are said, to be *the glory of the country*, which they trusted in, and boasted of as impregnable, these shall decay, be deserted, or betrayed, or fall into the enemies hand, so that Moab shall lie exposed, and whoever will, may penetrate into the heart of the country. Note, Those who glory in any other defence and protection but that of the divine power, providence, and promise, will, sooner or later, see cause to be ashamed of their glorying. (2.) See here to whom it shall be exposed; *the men of the east*, when they come to take possession of the country of the Ammonites, shall seize that of the Moabites too; God, the Lord of all lands, will give them that land; for the kingdoms of men he giveth to whomsoever he will. The Arabians that are *shepherds* and *live quietly*, plain men dwelling in tents, shall by an over-ruling providence be put in possession of the land of the Moabites, who are soldiers, men of war, and cunning hunters, that *live turbulently*. The Chaldeans shall get it by war, and the Arabians shall enjoy it in peace. Concerning the Ammonites it is said, they shall no *more be remembred among the nations*, ver. 10. for they had been accessary to the murther of Gedaliah, *Jer.* xl. 14. But of the Moabites it is said, *I will execute judgments upon Moab*; they shall feel the weight of God's displeasure, but perhaps not to that degree that the Ammonites shall; however, so far as that *they shall know that I am the Lord*; that the God of Israel is a God of power, and that his covenant with his people is not broken.

2. The Edomites: the posterity of Esau, betwixt whom and Jacob there had been an old enmity. And here is, (1.) The sin of the Edomites, *ver.* 12. they not only triumphed in the ruin of Judah and Jerusalem, as the Moabites and Ammonites had done, but they took advantage from the present distressed state to which the Jews were reduced, to do them some real mischiefs; probably made inroads upon their frontiers, and plundered their country; *Edom has dealt against the house of Judah by taking vengeance.* The Edomites had of old been tributaries to the Jews, according to the sentence that the elder should serve the younger. In Jehoram's time they revolted; Amaziah severely chastised them, 2 *Kings* xiv. 7. and for this they *took vengeance*; now they would pay off all the old scores; and not only incensed the Babylonians against Jerusalem, crying, *raze it, raze it*, Psal. cxxxvii. 7. but cut *off those that escaped*; as we find in the prophecy of Obadiah, which is wholly directed against Edom, *ver.* 11, 12, *&c.* It is called here *revenging a revenge*, which intimated that they were not only eager upon it, but very cruel in it, and recompensed to the Jews more than double. Herein he has greatly offended. Note, It is a great offence to God for us to

revenge our ſelves upon our brother; for God has ſaid, *Vengeance is mine.* We are forbidden to *revenge*, or to *bear a grudge.* Suppoſe Judah had been hard upon Edom formerly, it was a baſe thing for the Edomites now in revenge for it to *ſmite them ſecretly*: but the Jews had a divine warrant to reign over the Edomites, for that therefore they ought not to have made repriſals; and it was the more diſingenuous for them to retain the old core, when God had particularly commanded his people to forget it, *Deut.* xxiii. 7. *Thou ſhalt not abhor an Edomite.*

(2.) The judgments threatned againſt them for this ſin, God will take them to task for it; *ver.* 13. *I will ſtretch out my hand upon Edom.* Their country ſhall be deſolate *from Teman*, which lay in the ſouth part of it; and *they ſhall fall by the ſword unto Dedan*, which lay north; the deſolations of war ſhould go through the nation. (1.) They had *taken vengeance*; and therefore God will *lay his vengeance* upon them, *ver.* 14. and *they ſhall know my vengeance.* They that will not leave it to God to take vengeance *for them*, may expect that he will take vengeance *on them*; and they that will not *believe* and *fear* his vengeance, ſhall be made to know and feel his vengeance; they ſhall be dealt with *according to God's anger*, and *according to his fury*, not according to the weakneſs of the inſtruments that are employed in it, but according to the ſtrength of the arm that employs them. (2.) They had taken vengeance on Iſrael, and God will lay his vengeance on them *by the hand of his people Iſrael*; they ſuffered much by the Chaldeans, which ſeems to be referred to, *Jer.* xlix. 8. But beſides that there were *ſaviours* to come *upon mount Zion*, who ſhould judge the mount of Eſau, *Obad.* 21. And Iſrael's redeemer comes *with died garments from Bozrah*, Iſa. lxiii. 1. This implies a promiſe that Iſrael ſhould recover himſelf again, to that degree as to be in a capacity of curbing the inſolence of its neighbours. And we find, 1 *Mac.* v. 3. that *Judas Maccabeus fought againſt the children of Eſau in Idumea, gave them a great overthrow, abated their courage, and took their ſpoil.* And Joſephus ſaith, *Antiq. l.* xiii. *c.* 17. that Hircanus made the Edomites tributaries to Iſrael. Note, The equity of God's judgments is to be obſerved, when he not only avenges injuries upon thoſe that did them, but by thoſe againſt whom they were done.

3. The Philiſtines. And (1.) Their ſin is much the ſame with that of the Edomites; they have *dealt by revenge* with the people of Iſrael, and have *taken vengeance with a deſpiteful heart*, not to diſturb them only, but to *deſtroy them*, for *the old hatred*, ver. 15. the old grudge they bore them, or, as the margin reads it, *with perpetual hatred*, a hatred that began long ſince, and which they reſolved to continue: the anger was implacable; they *dealt by revenge*, traded in the acts of malice; it was their conſtant practice, and their heart, their ſpiteful heart, was upon it. (2.) Their puniſhment likewiſe is much the ſame, *ver.* 16. They that were for deſtroying God's people ſhall themſelves be *cut off* and deſtroyed. And, *ver.* 17. they that were for avenging themſelves, God will *execute great vengeance upon them.* This was fulfilled when that country was waſted by the Chaldean army, not long after the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, which is foretold, *Jer.* xlvii. It was ſtrange that theſe nations, which bordered upon the land of Iſrael, were not alarmed by the ſucceſs of the Chaldean army, and made to tremble in the apprehenſion of their own danger; when their neighbour's houſe was on fire, it was time to look to their own; but their impiety and malice made them forget their politicks, till God by his judgments convinced them, that the cup was going round; and they were not the leſs ſafe for their being ſecure.

CHAP. XXVI.

The prophet had ſoon done with thoſe four nations that he ſet his face againſt in the foregoing chapters; for they were not at that time very conſiderable in the world, nor would their fall make any great noiſe among the nations, nor any figure in hiſtory. But the city of Tyre is next ſet to the bar, which being a place of vaſt trade, was known all the world over; and therefore here are three whole chapters, this and the two that follow, ſpent in the prediction of the deſtruction of Tyre. We have the burthen of Tyre, *Iſa.* xxiii. *It is but juſt mentioned in Jeremiah, as ſharing with the natives in the common calamity,* chap. xxv. 22.—xxvii. 3.—xlvii. 4. *But Ezekiel is ordered to be large upon that head. In this chapter we have,* (1.) *The ſin charged upon Tyre, which was triumphing in the deſtruction of Jeruſalem,* ver. 2. (2.) *The deſtruction of Tyrus itſelf foretold.* (1.) *The extremity of this deſtruction, it ſhall be utterly ruined,* ver. 4—6. *And again,* ver. 12—14. (2.) *The inſtruments of this deſtruction, many nations,* ver. 3. *And the king of Babylon by name with his vaſt victorious army,* ver. 7—11. (3.) *The great ſurprize that this ſhould give to the neighbour nations, who would all admire the fall of ſo great a city, and be alarmed at it,* ver. 15—21.

1. AND it came to paſs in the eleventh year, in the firſt *day* of the month, *that* the word of the LORD came unto me, ſaying, 2. Son of man, becauſe that Tyrus hath ſaid againſt Jeruſalem, Aha, ſhe is broken *that was* the gates of the people: ſhe is turned unto me, I ſhall be repleniſhed *now* ſhe is laid waſte: 3. Therefore thus ſaith the Lord GOD, Behold, I *am* againſt thee, O Tyrus, and will cauſe many nations to come up againſt thee, as the ſea cauſeth his waves to come up. 4. And they ſhall deſtroy the walls of Tyrus, and break down her towers: I will alſo ſcrape her duſt from her, and make her like the top of a rock. 5. It ſhall be *a place for* the ſpreading of nets in the midſt of the ſea: for I have ſpoken *it*, ſaith the Lord GOD, and it ſhall become a ſpoil to the nations. 6. And her daughters which *are* in the field ſhall be ſlain by the ſword, and they ſhall know that I *am* the LORD. 7. ¶ For thus ſaith the Lord GOD, Behold, I will bring upon Tyrus Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, a king of kings, from the north, with horſes, and with chariots, and with horſemen, and companies, and much people. 8. He ſhall ſlay with the ſword thy daughters in the field, and he ſhall make a fort againſt thee, and caſt a mount againſt thee, and lift up the buckler againſt thee. 9. And he ſhall ſet engines of war againſt thy walls, and with his axes he ſhall break down thy towers. 10. By reaſon of the abundance of his horſes, their duſt ſhall cover thee, thy walls ſhall ſhake at the noiſe of the horſemen, and of the wheels, and of the chariots, when he ſhall enter into thy gates, as men enter into a city wherein is made a breach. 11. With the hoofs of his horſes ſhall he tread down all thy ſtreets; he ſhall ſlay thy people by the ſword, and thy ſtrong gariſons ſhall go down to the ground. 12. And they ſhall make a ſpoil of thy riches, and make a prey of thy merchandiſe, and they ſhall break down thy walls, and deſtroy thy pleaſant houſes, and they ſhall lay thy ſtones, and thy timber, and thy duſt in the midſt of the water. 13. And I will cauſe the noiſe of thy ſongs to ceaſe, and the ſound of thy harps ſhall be no more heard. 14. And I will make thee like the top of a rock: thou ſhalt be *a place* to ſpread nets upon: thou ſhalt be built no more: for I the LORD have ſpoken *it*, ſaith the Lord GOD.

This propheſy is dated in the eleventh year, which was the year that Jeruſalem was taken, and *in the firſt day of the month*, but it is not ſaid what month; ſome think the month in which Jeruſalem was taken, which was the fourth month, others the month after; or perhaps it was the firſt month, and ſo it was the firſt day of the year. Obſerve here,

1. The pleaſure with which the Tyrians looked upon the ruins of Jeruſalem. Ezekiel was a great way off, in Babylon, but God told him what Tyrus ſaid againſt Jeruſalem, *ver.* 2. *Aha, ſhe is broken*, broken to pieces, that was *the gates of the people*, to whom there was a great reſort, and where there was a general rendezvous of all nations, ſome upon one account, and ſome upon another, and I ſhall get by it; all the wealth, power, and intereſt, which Jeruſalem had, it is hoped, ſhall be turned to Tyre; and ſo *now ſhe is laid waſte, I ſhall be repleniſhed.* We do not find that the Tyrians had ſuch a hatred and enmity to Jeruſalem, and the ſanctuary, as the Ammonites and Edomites had, nor were ſo ſpiteful and miſchievous to the Jews; they were men of buſineſs, and of large acquaintance and free converſation; and therefore were not ſo bigotted, and of ſuch a perſecuting ſpirit, as the narrow ſouls that lived retired, and knew not the world; all their care was to get eſtates, and enlarge their trade, and they looked upon Jeruſalem not as an enemy, but as a rival. Hiram, king of Tyre, was a good friend to David and Solomon, and we do not read of any quarrels the Jews had with the Tyrians; but Tyre promiſed herſelf, that the fall of Jeruſalem will be an advantage to her, in reſpect of trade and commerce; that now ſhe ſhall have Jeruſalem's cuſtomers, and the great men from all parts, that uſed to come to Jeruſalem for the accompliſhing of themſelves, and to ſpend their eſtates there, will now come to Tyre, and ſpend them there; and whereas many, ſince the Chaldean army became ſo formidable in thoſe parts, had retired into Jeruſalem, and brought their eſtates thither for ſafety, as the Rechabites did, now they will come to Tyre, which being in a manner ſurrounded with the ſea, will be thought a place of greater ſtrength than Jeruſalem; and thus the proſperity of Tyre will riſe out of the ruins of Jeruſalem. Note, To be ſecretly pleaſed with the death or decay of others, when we are likely to get by it, with their fall when we may thrive

thrive upon it, is a ſin that doth moſt eaſily beſet us, but is not thought to be ſuch an ill thing, and ſo provoking to God, as really it is. We are apt to ſay, when thoſe who ſtand in our light, in our way, are removed, when they break or fall into diſgrace, we ſhall be *repleniſhed*, now they are *laid waſte*. But this comes from a ſelfiſh, covetous, principle, and a deſire to be *placed alone in the midſt of the earth*, as if we grudged that any ſhould live by us; This comes from a want of that love to our neighbour as to ourſelves, which the law of God ſo expreſsly requires, and from that inordinate love of the world as our happineſs, which the love of God ſo expreſsly forbids. And it is juſt with God to blaſt the deſigns and projects of thoſe who thus contrive to raiſe themſelves upon the ruins of others; and we ſee they are often diſappointed.

2. The diſpleaſure of God againſt them for it. The providence of God had done well for Tyrus, it was a pleaſant and wealthy city, and might have continued ſo, if ſhe had, as ſhe ought to have done, ſympathized with Jeruſalem in her calamities, and ſent her an addreſs of condolance; but when inſtead of that, ſhe ſhewed herſelf pleaſed with her neighbour's fall, and perhaps ſent an addreſs of congratulation to the conquerors, then God ſaith, *Behold, I am againſt thee, O Tyrus*, ver. 3. And let her not expect to proſper long if God be againſt her.

1. God will bring formidable enemies upon her. *Many nations ſhall come againſt thee*; i. e. an army made up of many nations; or one nation that ſhall be as ſtrong as many. Thoſe that have God *againſt them* may expect all the creatures *againſt them*; for what peace can they have with whom God is at war? They ſhall come pouring in as *the waves of the ſea*, one upon the neck of another with an irreſiſtible force. The perſon is named that ſhall bring this army upon them, *Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, a king of kings*, that had many kings tributaries to him, and dependents on him; beſides thoſe that were his captives, *Dan.* ii. 37, 38. He is that *head of gold*. He ſhall come with a vaſt army, *horſes and chariots*, &c. all land forces; we do not find he had any naval force, or any thing wherewith he might attack it by ſea, which made the attempt the more difficult, as we find *chap.* xxix. 18. where it is called a *great ſervice which he ſerved againſt Tyrus*. He ſhall beſiege it in form, *ver.* 8. *make a fort, and caſt a mount*, and, *ver.* 9. ſhall *ſet engines of war againſt the walls*. His troops ſhall be ſo numerous as to raiſe *a duſt* that ſhall *cover* the city, *ver.* 10. They ſhall make *a noiſe* that ſhall even *ſhake the walls*; and they ſhall ſhout at every attack, as ſoldiers do, when they *enter a city* that is *broken up*: the horſes ſhall prance with ſo much fury and violence that they ſhall even *tread down the ſtreets*, tho' never ſo well paved.

2. They ſhall do terrible execution. (1.) The enemy ſhall make themſelves maſters of all their fortifications, ſhall *deſtroy the walls*, and *break down the towers*, ver. 4. For what walls are ſo ſtrong built as to be fence againſt the judgments of God? Her *ſtrong garriſons ſhall go down to the ground*, ver. 11. And the *walls* ſhall be *broken down*, ver. 12. The city held out a long ſiege, but it was taken at laſt. (2.) A great deal of blood ſhall be ſhed; *her daughters which are in the field*, the cities upon the continent, which were ſubject to Tyre as the mother city, the inhabitants of them *ſhall be ſlain by the ſword*, ver. 6. The invaders begin with them that come firſt in their way. And, ver. 11. *He ſhall ſlay thy people with the ſword*, not only the ſoldiers that are found in arms, but the burghers they ſhall be *put to the ſword*, the king of Babylon being highly incenſed againſt them, for holding out ſo long. (3.) The wealth of the city ſhall all become a ſpoil to the conqueror, *ver.* 12. They *ſhall make a prey of the merchandiſe*; it was in hope of the plunder, that the city was ſet upon with ſo much vigour. See the vanity of *riches*, that they are *kept for the owners to their hurt*; make a thief; and not only ceaſe to benefit thoſe who took pains for them, and were duly entitled to them, but are made to ſerve their enemies, who are thereby put into a capacity of doing them ſo much the more miſchief. (4.) The city itſelf ſhall be laid in ruins. All the *pleaſant houſes* ſhall be *deſtroyed*, ver. 12. that were pleaſantly ſituated, beautified, and furniſhed, they ſhall become a heap of rubbiſh. Let none pleaſe themſelves too much in their pleaſant houſes, for they know not how ſoon they may ſee the deſolation of them. Tyre ſhall be utterly ruined, the enemy ſhall not only pull down the houſes, but ſhall carry away *the ſtones and the timber*, which might ſerve for the rebuilding of it, and ſhall *lay them in the midſt of the water*, not to be recovered or ever made uſe of again. Nay, *ver.* 4. *I will ſcrape her duſt from her*; not only ſhall the looſe duſt be blown away, but the very ground it ſtands upon ſhall be torn up by the enraged enemy, carried off, and laid *in the midſt of the water*, ver. 12. The *foundation* is *in the duſt*, that duſt ſhall be all taken away, and then the city muſt fall on courſe. When Jeruſalem was deſtroyed, it was *plowed like a field*, Mic. iii. 12. But the deſtruction of Tyre is carried further than ſo, the very *ſoil* of it ſhall be *ſcraped* away; and it ſhall be made *like the top of a rock*, ver. 4. and again, *ver.* 14. pure rock that hath no earth to cover it; it ſhall only be a place, *for the ſpreading of nets*, ver. 5. and again, *ver.* 14. it ſhall ſerve fiſhermen to dry their nets upon, and mend them. (5.) There ſhall be a full period to all its mirth and joy, *ver.* 13. *I will cauſe the noiſe of thy ſongs to ceaſe*. Tyre had been a joyous city, *Iſa.* xxiii. 7. with her *ſongs* ſhe had courted cuſtomers to deal with her in a way of trade; but now farewel all her profitable commerce and pleaſant converſation; Tyre is no more a place either of buſineſs or of ſport. Laſtly, It ſhall be *built no more*, ver. 14. not built any more as it had been, with ſuch ſtate and magnificence; nor built any more in the ſame place within the ſea, nor built of a long time; the preſent inhabitants ſhall be deſtroyed or diſperſed, ſo that this Tyre ſhall be *no more*. For *God hath ſpoken* it, *ver.* 5; 14. and when what he hath ſaid is accompliſhed, *they ſhall know* thereby that *he is the Lord*, and *not a man that he ſhould lie, or the ſon of man that he ſhould repent*.

15. ¶ Thus ſaith the Lord GOD to Tyrus, Shall not the iſles ſhake at the ſound of thy fall, when the wounded cry, when the ſlaughter is made in the midſt of thee? 16. Then all the princes of the ſea ſhall come down from their thrones, and lay away their robes, and put off their broidered garments: they ſhall clothe themſelves with trembling, they ſhall ſit upon the ground, and ſhall tremble at *every* moment, and be aſtoniſhed at thee. 17. And they ſhall take up a lamentation for thee, and ſay to thee, How art thou deſtroyed *that waſt* inhabited of ſea-faring men, the renowned city which waſt ſtrong in the ſea, ſhe and her inhabitants, which cauſe their terror *to be* on all that haunt it? 18. Now ſhall the iſles tremble in the day of thy fall; yea, the iſles that *are* in the ſea ſhall be troubled at thy departure. 19. For thus ſaith the Lord GOD, When I ſhall make thee a deſolate city, like the cities that are not inhabited, when I ſhall bring up the deep upon thee, and great waters ſhall cover thee; 20. When I ſhall bring thee down with them that deſcend into the pit, with the people of old time, and ſhall ſet thee in the low parts of the earth, in places deſolate of old, with them that go down to the pit, that thou be not inhabited, and I ſhall ſet glory in the land of the living: 21. I will make thee a terror, and thou *ſhalt be* no *more*: though thou be ſought for, yet ſhalt thou never be found again, ſaith the Lord GOD.

The utter ruin of Tyre is here repreſented in very ſtrong and lively figures, which are mighty affecting.

1. See how *high*, how *great*, Tyre had been, how little likely ever to have come to this. The remembrance of mens former grandeur and plenty, is a great aggravation of their preſent diſgrace and poverty. Tyre was *a renowned city*, ver. 17. famous among the nations, the *crowning* city, ſo ſhe is called *Iſa.* xxiii. 8. a city that had crowns in her gift, honoured all ſhe ſmiled upon, crowned herſelf, and all about her; ſhe was *inhabited of ſeas*, i. e. of thoſe that trade at ſea, of thoſe who from all parts came thither by ſea, bringing with them the *abundance of the ſeas*, and *the treaſures hid in the ſand*. She was *ſtrong in the ſea*; eaſy of acceſs to her friends, but to her enemies inacceſſible; fortified by a *wall of water* which made her impregnable. So that *ſhe* with her pomp, and *her inhabitants* with her pride, *cauſed their terror* to be on all that *haunted* that city, and upon any account frequented it. It was well fortified, and formidable in the eyes of all that acquainted themſelves with it. Every body ſtood in awe of the Tyrians, and was afraid of diſobliging them. Note, Thoſe who know their ſtrength are too apt to cauſe their terror, to pride themſelves in frightning thoſe they are an over-match for.

2. See how *low*, how *little* Tyre is made, *ver.* 19, 20. This *renowned city* is made a *deſolate city*, is no more frequented as it has been, there is no more reſort of merchants to it, it is *like the cities not inhabited*, which are no cities, and having none to keep them in repair will go to decay of themſelves; Tyre ſhall be like a city overflowed by an inundation of waters, which *cover* it, and upon which the *deep* is *brought up*. As the waves had formerly been *its defence*, ſo now they ſhall be *its deſtruction*. She ſhall be *brought down with them that deſcend into the pit*, with the cities of the old world that were under water, and with *Sodom and Gomorrah*, that lie in the bottom of the dead ſea: Or, ſhe ſhall be in the condition of thoſe that have been long buried, of the *people of old time*, that are old inhabitants of the ſilent grave, who are quite rotted away under ground, and quite forgotten above ground; ſuch ſhall *Tyre be, free among the dead*; *ſet in the lower parts of the earth*, humbled, mortified, reduced. It ſhall be *like the places deſolate of old*, as well as like perſons dead of old; it ſhall be like other cities that have formerly been in like manner deſerted and deſtroyed. It ſhall *not be inhabited* again; none ſhall have the courage to attempt the rebuilding of it, upon that ſpot, ſo that *it ſhall be no more*, the Tyrians ſhall be loſt among the nations, ſo that people will look in vain for Tyre in Tyre, *Thou ſhalt be ſought for, and never found again*. New perſons may build a new city, upon a new ſpot of ground hard by, which they

may call Tyre, but Tyre, as it is, ſhall never be any more. Note, The ſtrongeſt cities in this world, the beſt-fortified and beſt furniſhed are ſubject to decay, and may in a little time be brought to nothing. In the hiſtory of our own iſland, many cities are ſpoken of, as in being when the Romans were here; which now our antiquaries ſcarce know where to look for, and of which there remains no more evidence, but Roman urns and coins digged up there ſometimes accidentally. But in the other world we look for a city that ſhall ſtand for ever, and flouriſh in perfection through all the ages of eternity.

3. See what a diſtreſs the inhabitants of Tyre are in, *ver.* 15. *There is a great ſlaughter made in the midſt of thee*, many ſlain, and great men; it is probable, when the city was taken, the generality of the inhabitants were put to the ſword, then did *the wounded cry*, and cried in vain to the pitileſs conquerors; they cried *quarter*, but it would not be given them; the wounded are *ſlain* without mercy, or rather, that is the only mercy that is ſhewed them, that the ſecond blow ſhall rid them out of their pain.

4. See what a conſternation all the neighbours are in upon the fall of Tyre. This is elegantly expreſſed here, to ſhew how aſtoniſhing it ſhould be. (1.) The *iſlands* ſhall *ſhake at the ſound of thy fall*, ver. 15. As if a great merchant breaks, all that he deals with are ſhocked by it, and begin to look about them; perhaps they had effects in his hands, which they are afraid they ſhall loſe: Or, when they ſee one fail and become bankrupt of a ſudden, in debt a great deal more than he is worth, it makes them afraid for themſelves, leſt they ſhould do ſo too. Thus *the iſles* who thought themſelves ſafe in the embraces of the ſea, when they ſee Tyrus fall, ſhall *tremble*, and *be troubled*, ſaying, What will become of us? And it is well if they make this good uſe of it, to take warning by it not to be ſecure, but to ſtand in awe of God and his judgments. The ſudden fall of a great tower ſhakes the ground round about it; thus all the iſlands in the Mediterranean ſea ſhall feel themſelves ſenſibly touched by the deſtruction of Tyre, it being a place they had ſo much knowledge of, ſuch intereſts in, and ſuch a conſtant correſpondence with. (2.) The *princes of the ſea* ſhall be affected with it, who ruled in thoſe iſlands; or the rich merchants, who live like princes, *Iſa.* xxiii. 8. and the maſters of ſhips who command like princes, theſe ſhall condole the fall of Tyre, in a moſt compaſſionate and pathetical manner, *ver.* 16. *They ſhall come down from their thrones*, as neglecting the buſineſs of their thrones, and deſpiſing the pomp of them; they ſhall *lay away their robes* of ſtate, *their broidered garments*, and ſhall *clothe themſelves* all over with *tremblings*, with ſackcloth that will make them ſhiver. Or, they ſhall by their own act and deed make themſelves to tremble upon this occaſion; they ſhall *ſit upon the ground* in ſhame and ſorrow; they ſhall *tremble every moment* at the thought of what is happened to Tyre, and for fear of what may happen to themſelves; for what iſland is ſafe if Tyre be not? They ſhall *take up a lamentation for thee*, ſhall have elegies and mournful poems penned upon the fall of Tyre, *ver.* 17. *How art thou deſtroyed!* (1.) It ſhall be a *great ſurprize* to them, and they ſhall be affected with wonder; that a place ſo well fortified by nature and art, ſo famed for politicks, and ſo full of money, which is the ſinews of war, and that held out ſo long, and with ſo much bravery, ſhould be taken at laſt. *Ver.* 21. *I make thee a terror.* Note, Thoſe who make themſelves a terror to their neighbours, by the abuſe of their power, it is juſt with God to make them a terror to their neighbours by the ſuddenneſs and ſtrangeneſs of their puniſhment. Tyre had *cauſed her terror*, ver. 17. and now is made a terrible example. (2.) It ſhall be a *great affliction* to them, and they ſhall be affected with ſorrow, *ver.* 17. they ſhall *take up a lamentation for Tyre*, as thinking it a thouſand pities that ſuch a rich and ſplendid city ſhould be thus laid in ruins. When Jeruſalem, the holy city, was deſtroyed, there were no ſuch lamentations for it, it was *nothing* to *them that paſſed by*, Lam. i. 12. but when Tyre the trading city fell it was univerſally bemoaned. Note, Thoſe who have the world in their hearts lament the loſs of great men, more than the loſs of good men. (3.) It ſhall be a loud alarm to them. *They ſhall tremble in the day of thy fall*, becauſe they ſhall have reaſon to think that their own turn will be next. If Tyre fall, who can ſtand? *Howl fir-trees, if ſuch a cedar be ſhaken.* Note, The fall of others ſhould awaken us out of our ſecurity. Others death or decay in the world is a check to us, when we dream that our mountain *ſtands ſtrong, and ſhall not be moved.*

5. See how the irreparable ruin of Tyre is aggravated by the proſpect of the reſtoration of Iſrael. Thus ſhall Tyre ſink, *when I ſhall ſet glory in the land of the living*, ver. 20. Note, 1. The holy land is the *land of the living*; for none but *holy ſouls* are properly *living ſouls*; where living ſacrifices are offered to the living God, and where the lively oracles are, there *the land of the living* is: there David hoped to *ſee the goodneſs of the Lord*, Pſal. xxvii. 13. That was a type of heaven, which is indeed the *land of the living*. 2. Though this *land of the living* may for a time lie under diſgrace, yet God will again *ſet glory* in it; the *glory* that is *departed* ſhall *return*; and the reſtoration of what they had been deprived of ſhall be ſo much more their glory. God will himſelf be *the glory* of the lands, that are the *lands of the living*. 3. It will aggravate the miſery of thoſe that have their portion in the land of the dying, of thoſe that are for ever dying, to behold the happineſs of thoſe, at the ſame time, that ſhall have their everlaſting portion in *the land of the living*. When the rich man was himſelf in torment, he ſaw Lazarus in the boſom of Abraham, and glory ſet for him *in the land of the living*.

CHAP. XXVII.

Still we are attending the funeral of Tyre, and the lamentations made for the fall of that renowned city. In this chapter we have, (1.) A large account of the dignity, wealth, and ſplendor of Tyre, while it was in its ſtrength, the vaſt trade it drove, and the intereſt it had among the nations, ver. 1—25. *which is deſigned to make its ruin the more lamentable.* (2.) *A prediction of its fall and ruin, and the confuſion and conſternation which all its neighbours ſhall thereby be put into,* ver. 26—36. *And this is intended to ſtain the pride of all worldly glory, and by ſetting the one over againſt the other; to let us ſee the vanity and uncertainty of the riches, honours, and pleaſures, of the world, and what little reaſon we have to place our happineſs in them, or to be confident of the continuance of them; ſo that all this is written for our learning.*

1. THE word of the LORD came again unto me, ſaying, 2. Now thou ſon of man, take up a lamentation for Tyrus; 3. And ſay unto Tyrus, O thou that art ſituate at the entry of the ſea, *which art* a merchant of the people for many iſles, Thus ſaith the Lord GOD, O Tyrus, thou haſt ſaid, I *am* of perfect beauty. 4. Thy borders *are* in the midſt of the ſeas, thy builders have perfected thy beauty. 5. They have made all thy *ſhip*-boards of fir-trees of Senir: they have taken cedars from Lebanon, to make maſts for thee. 6. *Of* the oaks of Baſhan have they made thine oars: the company of the Aſhurites have made thy benches *of* ivory, *brought* out of the iſles of Chittim. 7. Fine linen with broidered work from Egypt, was that which thou ſpreadeſt forth to be thy ſail; blue and purple from the iſles of Eliſhah was that which covered thee. 8. The inhabitants of Zidon and Arvad were thy mariners: thy wiſe *men*, O Tyrus, *that* were in thee, were thy pilots. 9. The ancients of Gebal, and the wiſe *men* thereof were in thee thy calkers, all the ſhips of the ſea with their mariners were in thee to occupy thy merchandiſe. 10. They of Perſia, and of Lud, and of Phut were in thine army, thy men of war: they hanged the ſhield and helmet in thee, they ſet forth thy comelineſs. 11. The men of Arvad with thine army *were* upon thy walls round about, and the Gammadims were in thy towers; they hanged their ſhields upon thy walls round about: they have made thy beauty perfect. 12. Tarſhiſh *was* thy merchant by reaſon of the multitude of all *kind of* riches; with ſilver, iron, tin, and lead, they traded in thy fairs. 13. Javan, Tubal, and Meſhech, they *were* thy merchants: they traded the perſons of men, and veſſels of braſs in thy market. 14. They of the houſe of Togarmah traded in thy fairs, with horſes, and horſemen, and mules. 15. The men of Dedan *were* thy merchants, many iſles *were* the merchandiſe of thine hand: they brought thee *for* a preſent, horns of ivory and ebony. 16. Syria *was* thy merchant by reaſon of the multitude of the wares of thy making: they occupied in thy fairs with emeralds, purple, and broidered work, and fine linen, and coral, and agate. 17. Judah and the land of Iſrael, they *were* thy merchants: they traded in thy market wheat of Minnith, and Pannag, and honey, and oyl, and balm. 18. Damaſcus *was* thy merchant in the multitude of the wares of thy making, for the multitude of all riches: in the wine of Helbon, and white wooll. 19. Dan alſo and Javan going to and fro, occupied in thy fairs: bright iron, caſſia, and calamus were in thy market. 20. Dedan *was* thy merchant in precious clothes for chariots. 21. Arabia, and all the princes of Kedar, they occupied with thee in lambs, and rams, and goats: in theſe *were they* thy merchants. 22. The merchants of Sheba and Raamah, they *were* thy merchants: they occupied in

in thy fairs with chief of all ſpices, and with all precious ſtones, and gold. 23. Haran and Canneh, and Eden, the merchants of Sheba, Aſhur, *and* Chilmad *were* thy merchants. 24. Theſe *were* thy merchants in all ſorts *of things*, in blue clothes, and broidered work, and in cheſts of rich apparel, bound with cords, and made of cedar among thy merchandiſe. 25. The ſhips of Tarſhiſh did ſing of thee in thy market, and thou waſt repleniſhed, and made very glorious in the midſt of the ſeas.

Here, 1. The prophet is ordered to take up a lamentation for Tyrus, *ver.* 2. It was yet in the height of its proſperity, and there appeared not the leaſt ſymptom of its decay, yet the prophet muſt *lament it*, becauſe its proſperity is its ſnare, is the cauſe of its pride and ſecurity, which will make its fall the more grievous. Even thoſe that *live at eaſe* are to be *lamented*, if they were not preparing for trouble. He muſt lament it becauſe its ruin is haſtning on apace, it is ſure, it is near, and though the prophet foretel it, and juſtify God in it, yet he muſt *lament it*. Note, We ought to mourn for the miſeries of other nations, as well as of our own, out of an affection for mankind in general; it is a part of the *honour* we owe to *all men* to bewail their calamities, even thoſe which they have brought upon themſelves by their own folly.

2. He is directed what to ſay, and to ſay it in the name of *the Lord Jehovah*, a name not unknown in Tyre, and which ſhall be better known, *chap.* xxvi. 6.

1. He muſt upbraid Tyre with her pride. *O Tyrus, thou haſt ſaid, I am of perfect beauty*, ver. 3. of *univerſal beauty*; ſo the word is; every way accompliſhed, and therefore every where admired. Zion that had the *beauty of holineſs* is called indeed the *perfection of beauty*, Pſal. l. 2. that is the *beauty of the Lord*. But Tyre becauſe well built, and well filled with money and trade, will ſet up for a perfect beauty. Note, It is the folly of the children of this world to value themſelves by the pomp and pleaſure they live in, and to call themſelves *beauties* for the ſake of them. And if in theſe they excel others, to think themſelves *perfect*. But God takes notice of the vain conceits men have of themſelves in their proſperity, when the mind is lifted up with the condition, and often for the humbling of the ſpirit finds ways to bring down the eſtate. Let none reckon themſelves *beautified* any further than they are *ſanctified*, nor ſay they are of *perfect beauty* till they come to *heaven*.

2. He muſt upbraid Tyre with her proſperity, which was the matter of her pride. In elegies it is uſual to inſert *encomiums* of thoſe whoſe fall we lament; the prophet accordingly praiſeth Tyre, for all that ſhe had that was praiſe-worthy. He has nothing to ſay of her religion, her piety, her charity, her being a refuge to the diſtreſſed, or uſing her intereſt to do good offices among her neighbours; but ſhe lived great, and had a great trade, and all the trading part of mankind made court to her. The prophet muſt deſcribe her height and magnificence, that God may be the more glorified in her fall, as the God who *looks upon every one that is proud, and abaſeth them; hides them in the duſt together, and binds their faces in ſecret*, Job xl. 12.

1. The city of Tyre was advantageouſly ſituated, *at the entry of the ſea*, ver. 3. having many commodious harbours each way, not as cities ſeated on rivers, which the ſhipping can come but one way to. It ſtood at the eaſt end of the Mediterranean, very convenient for trade by land into all the Levant parts; ſo that ſhe became a *merchant of the people for many iſles*; lying between Greece and Aſia, it became the great emporium, or mart-town, the rendezvous of merchants from all parts. *Thy borders are in the heart of the ſeas*, ver. 4. It was ſurrounded with water, which was a great advantage to its trade; the darling of the ſea, laid in its boſom, in its heart. Note, It is a great convenience upon many accounts to live in an iſland; ſeas are the moſt *ancient land-mark*, not *which our fathers have ſet*, but the God of our fathers, and which cannot be *removed* as other *land-marks* may, nor ſo eaſily got over. The people ſo ſituated may the eaſier *dwell alone*, if they pleaſe, as not reckoned among the nations; and yet, if they pleaſe, may the eaſier *traffick abroad*, and keep a correſpondence with the nations. We therefore of this iſland muſt own, that he who determines the bounds of mens habitations has determined well for us.

2. It was curiouſly built, according as the faſhion then was; and being a city on a hill it made a glorious ſhew, and tempted the ſhips that ſailed by into her ports, *ver.* 4. *Thy builders have perfected thy beauty*. They have ſo improved in architecture, that nothing appears in the buildings of Tyre that can be found fault with; and yet it wants that perfection of beauty into which the Lord doth and will build up his Jeruſalem.

3. It had its haven repleniſhed with abundance of *gallant ſhips*, Iſa. xxxiii. 21. The ſhip-carpenters did their part, as well as the houſe-carpenters theirs. The Tyrians are thought to be the firſt that invented the art of navigation; however they improved it, and brought it to as great a perfection perhaps as it could be without the loadſtone. (1.) They made the *boards*, or planks, for the hulk of the ſhip of *fir-trees* fetched from Senir, a mount in the land of Iſrael, joined with Hermon; *Cant.* iv. 8. Planks of fir were ſmooth and light, but not ſo laſting as our Engliſh oak. (2.) They had cedars from *Lebanon*, another mountain of Iſrael, for their maſts, *ver.* 5. (3.) They had oaks from Baſhan, *Iſa.* ii. 13. to make oars of; for it is probable their ſhips were moſtly gallies, that go with oars. The people of Iſrael built few ſhips for themſelves, but they furniſhed the Tyrians with timber for ſhipping: Thus one country uſeth what another produceth, and ſo they are ſerviceable one to another, and cannot ſay to each other, *I have no need of thee*. (4.) Such magnificence did they affect in building their ſhips, that they made the very *benches* of *ivory*, which they fetched from *the iſles of Chittim*, from Italy or Greece, and had workmen from the Aſhurites or Aſſyrians to make them; ſo rich would they have their ſtate-rooms in their ſhips to be. (5.) So very prodigal were they, that they made their *ſails* of *fine linen* fetched from Egypt, and that *embroidered* too, *ver.* 7. Or it may be meant of their *flags*, which they hoiſted to notify what city they belonged to, which were very coſtly. The word ſignifies a *banner*, as well as a *ſail*. (6.) They hung thoſe rooms on ſhip-board with *blue and purple*, the richeſt clothes, and richeſt colours they could get from the iſles they traded with. For though Tyre was itſelf famous for *purple*, which is therefore called the Tyrian die, yet they muſt have that which was *far-fetched*.

4. Theſe gallant ſhips were *well-manned*, by men of great ingenuity, and induſtry. The *pilots* and maſters of the ſhips that had command in their fleets were of their own city; ſuch as they could put a confidence in; *ver.* 8. *Thy wiſe men, O Tyrus, that were in thee were thy pilots:* But for common ſailors, they had them from other countries; *the inhabitants of Arvad and Zidon were thy mariners*; theſe came from cities near them, Zidon was ſiſter to Tyre, not two leagues off to the northward; there they bred able ſeamen, which it is the intereſt of the maritime powers to ſupport, and give all the countenance they can to. They ſent to Gebal in Syria for *calkers*, or *ſtrengtheners of the clefts*, or *chinks*, to ſtop them when the ſhips come home after long voyages to be repaired. To do this they had the *ancients* and *wiſe men*, ver. 9. For there is more need of wiſdom and prudence to repair what is gone to decay, than to build anew: In publick matters there is occaſion for the *ancients* and *wiſe men* to be the *repairers of the breaches, and the reſtorers of paths to dwell in*. Nay, all the countries they traded with were at their ſervice, and were willing to ſend men into their pay, or to ſet their youth apprentices in Tyre, or put them on board their fleets; ſo that *all the ſhips in the ſea with their mariners were* ready *to occupy thy merchandiſe*. Thoſe that give good wages ſhall have hands at command.

5. Their city was guarded by a military force that was very conſiderable, *ver.* 10, 11. The Tyrians were themſelves wholly given to trade; but it was neceſſary they ſhould have a good army on foot, and therefore took thoſe of other ſtates into their pay, ſuch as were fitteſt for ſervice; though they had them from afar (which perhaps was their policy) from Perſia, Lud, and Phut. Theſe bore their arms when there was occaſion; and in time of peace *hanged up the ſhield and buckler* in the armory, as it were to proclaim peace, and let the world know that they had at preſent no need of them; but they were ready to be taken down when ever there was occaſion for them. Their *walls* were *guarded* by the *men of Arvad*, their *towers* were garriſoned by *the Gammadims*, robuſt men, that had a great deal of ſtrength in *their arms*; yet the vulgar Latin renders it pigmies, men no longer than one's arm. They *hung their ſhields upon the walls* in their magazines, or places of arms; or hung them out upon the walls of the city, that none might dare to approach them, ſeeing how well provided they were with all things neceſſary for their own defence. Thus *they ſet forth thy comelineſs*, ver. 10. and *made thy beauty perfect*, ver. 11. It contributed as much as any thing to the glory of Tyre, that it had thoſe of all nations about in its ſervice, except of the land of Iſrael, (though it lay next them) which furniſhed them with timber, but we do not find it furniſhed them with men; that would have entrenched upon the liberty and dignity of the Jewiſh nation, 2 *Chron.* ii. 17, 18. Alſo that it had ſuch a militia, ſo fit for ſervice, and in conſtant pay; and ſuch an armory like that in the tower of David, where hung the *ſhields of mighty men*, Cant. iv. 4. It is obſervable, that there and here the armories are ſaid to be furniſhed with *ſhields* and *helmets*, defenſive arms, not with *ſwords* and *ſpears*, offenſive; though it is probable there were ſuch; to intimate, that the military force of a people muſt be intended only for their own protection; and not to invade and annoy their neighbours; to ſecure their own right, not to encroach upon the rights of others.

6. They had a vaſt trade, and a correſpondence with all parts of the known world. Some nations they dealt with in one commodity, and ſome in another, according as either its products or its manufactures were, and the fruits of nature or art were with which it was bleſſed. This is very much enlarged upon here, as that which was the principal glory of Tyre, and which ſupported all the reſt. We do not find any where in ſcripture ſo many nations named together, as are here; ſo that this chapter, ſome think, gives much light to the firſt account we have of the ſettle-

ſettlement of the nations after the flood, *Gen.* x. The criticks have abundance of work here to find out the ſeveral places and nations ſpoken of; and concerning many of them their conjectures are different, and they leave us in the dark, and at much uncertainty; it is well it is not material; modern ſurveys come ſhort of explaining the ancient geography. And therefore we will not amuſe ourſelves here with a particular enquiry, either concerning the traders, or the goods they traded in; we leave it to the critical expoſitors, and obſerve that only which is improvable.

1. We have reaſon to think that Ezekiel knew little of his own knowledge, concerning the trade of Tyre; he was a prieſt, carried away captive far enough from the neighbourhood of Tyre, we may ſuppoſe when he was young, there he had been eleven years. And yet he ſpeaks of the particular merchandiſes of Tyre, as nicely as if he had been comptroller of the cuſtom-houſe there; by which it appears that he was *divinely inſpired* in what he ſpoke and wrote. It is God that *ſaith this*, ver. 3.

2. This account of the trade of Tyre intimates to us, that God's eye is upon men, and he takes cognizance of what they do, when they are employed in their worldly buſineſs; not only when they are at church praying and hearing, but when they are in their markets and fairs, and upon the exchange, buying and ſelling; which is a good reaſon why we ſhould in all our dealings *keep conſcience void of offence*; and have our eye always upon him whoſe eye is always upon us.

3. We may here obſerve the wiſdom of God, and his goodneſs as the common Father of mankind, in making one country to abound in one commodity, and another in another, and all more or leſs ſerviceable either to the neceſſity, or to the comfort and ornament of human life. *Non omnis fert omnia tellus.* Providence diſpenſeth its gifts variouſly, ſome to each, and all to none, that there may be a mutual commerce among thoſe whom God has *made of one blood*, tho' they are made to dwell on *all the face of the earth*, Acts xvii. 26. Let every nation therefore thank God for the products of its country, tho' they be not ſo rich as thoſe of others, yet there is uſe for them in the publick ſervice of the world.

4. See what a bleſſing trade and merchandiſe is to mankind, eſpecially when it is followed in the fear of God, and with a regard not only to private advantage, but to a common benefit. *The earth is full of Gods riches*, Pſal. civ. 24. There is a *multitude of all kind of riches* in it, as it is here, *ver.* 12. gathered off its ſurface and digged out of its bowels. The earth is alſo full of the fruits of mens ingenuity and induſtry, according as their genius leads them; now by exchange and barter theſe are made more extenſively uſeful; thus what can be ſpared is helped off, and what is wanted is fetched in in lieu of it, from the moſt diſtant countries. Thoſe that are not tradeſmen themſelves, yet have reaſon to thank God for tradeſmen and merchants, by whom the products of other countries are brought to our hands, as thoſe of our own are by our husbandmen.

5. Beſides the neceſſaries that are here traded in, ſee what abundance of things are here mentioned that only ſerve to pleaſe fancy, and are valuable only by mens humour and cuſtom; and yet God allows us to uſe them, and trade in them, and part with thoſe things for them which we can ſpare, that are of an intrinſick worth much beyond them. Here are *horns of ivory and ebony*, ver. 15. that are *brought for a preſent*, i. e. expoſed to ſale, and offered in exchange, or, as ſome think, preſented to the city, or the great men of it, to obtain their favour. Here are *emeralds*, *coral*, and *agate*, ver. 16. all *precious ſtones and gold*, ver. 22. which the world could better be without than iron and common ſtones. Here are to pleaſe the taſte and ſmell the *chief of all ſpices*, ver. 22. *caſſia and calamus*, ver. 19. and for ornament, *purple*, *broidered work*, *and fine linen*, ver. 16. *Precious clothes for chariots*, ver. 20. *Blue clothes* (which Tyre was famous for) *broidered work*, and *cheſts of rich apparel*, *bound with* rich *cords*, and *made of cedar*, a ſweet wood to perfume the garments kept in them, *ver.* 24. Upon the review of this invoice, or bill of parcels, we may juſtly ſay, what a great many things are here that we have *no need of*, and can live very comfortably without?

6. It is obſervable that Judah and the *land of Iſrael* were merchants in Tyre too; in a way of trade they were allowed to converſe with the heathen. But they traded moſtly *in wheat*, a ſubſtantial commodity, and neceſſary; *wheat of Minnith and Pannag*, two countries in Canaan famous for the beſt wheat, as ſome think; the whole land indeed was a *land of wheat*, Deut. viii. 8. it had *the fat of kidneys of wheat*, Deut. xxxii. 14. Tyre was maintained by corn fetched from the land of Iſrael: they traded likewiſe in *honey* and *oil*, and *balm*, or roſin; all uſeful things, and not ſerving to pride or luxury. And the land which theſe were the ſtaple-commodities of, was that which was the *glory of all lands*, which God reſerved for his peculiar people, not thoſe that traded in ſpices and *precious ſtones*; and the Iſrael of God muſt reckon themſelves well provided for, if they have *food convenient*; for they that are acquainted with the delights of the children of God will not ſet their hearts on the *delights of the ſons and daughters of men*, or the *treaſures of kings and provinces*. We find indeed that the New Teſtament Babylon trades in ſuch things as Tyre traded in, *Rev.* xviii. 12, 13. For notwithſtanding its pretenſions to ſanctity, it is a mere worldly intereſt.

7. Tho' Tyre was a city of great merchandiſe, and they got abundance by buying and ſelling, importing commodities from one place, and exporting them to another; yet manufacture trades were not neglected. The *wares of their own making*, and a *multitude of ſuch wares* are here ſpoken of, *ver.* 16. and again, *ver.* 18. It is the wiſdom of a nation to encourage art and induſtry, and not to bear hard upon the handicraft tradeſmen; for it contributes much to the wealth and honour of a nation to ſend abroad *wares of their own making*, which may bring them in the *multitude of all riches.*

8. All this made Tyrus very great, and very proud. *The ſhips of Tarſhiſh did ſing of thee in thy market*, ver. 25. *i. e.* Thou waſt admired and cried up by all the nations that had dealings with thee; for *thou waſt repleniſhed* in wealth and number of people, waſt beautified and *made very glorious in the midſt of the ſeas.* Thoſe that grow very rich are cried up as *very glorious*; for riches are glorious things in the eyes of carnal people, *Gen.* xxxi. 1.

26. ¶ Thy rowers have brought thee into great waters: the eaſt-wind hath broken thee in the midſt of the ſeas. 27. Thy riches and thy fairs, thy merchandiſe, thy mariners, and thy pilots, thy calkers, and the occupiers of thy merchandiſe, and all thy men of war that *are* in thee, and in all thy company which *is* in the midſt of thee, ſhall fall into the midſt of the ſeas in the day of thy ruin. 28. The ſuburbs ſhall ſhake at the ſound of the cry of thy pilots. 29. And all that handle the oar, the mariners, *and* all the pilots of the ſea, ſhall come down from their ſhips, they ſhall ſtand upon the land; 30. And ſhall cauſe their voice to be heard againſt thee, and ſhall cry bitterly, and ſhall caſt up duſt upon their heads, they ſhall wallow themſelves in the aſhes. 31. And they ſhall make themſelves utterly bald for thee, and gird them with ſackcloth, and they ſhall weep for thee with bitterneſs of heart, *and* bitter wailing. 32. And in their wailing they ſhall take up a lamentation for thee, and lament over thee, *ſaying*, What *city is* like Tyrus, like the deſtroyed in the midſt of the ſea? 33. When thy wares went forth out of the ſeas, thou filledſt many people, thou didſt enrich the kings of the earth with the multitude of thy riches, and of thy merchandiſe. 34. In the time *when* thou ſhalt be broken by the ſeas in the depths of the waters, thy merchandiſe and all thy company in the midſt of thee ſhall fall. 35. All the inhabitants of the iſles ſhall be aſtoniſhed at thee, and their kings ſhall be ſore afraid, they ſhall be troubled in *their* countenance. 36. The merchants among the people ſhall hiſs at thee, thou ſhalt be a terror, and never *ſhalt be* any more.

We have ſeen Tyre flouriſhing, here we have Tyre falling; and great is the fall of it, ſo much the greater for its having made ſuch a figure in the world. Note, The moſt mighty and magnificent kingdoms and ſtates ſooner or later have their day to come down; they have their period: and when they are in their zenith, they will begin to decline; but the deſtruction of Tyre was ſudden. Her *ſun went down at noon.* And all her wealth and grandeur, pomp and power, did but aggravate her ruin, and make it the more grievous to her ſelf, and aſtoniſhing to all about her. Now obſerve here,

1. How the ruin of Tyrus will be brought about, *ver.* 26. She is as a great ſhip richly laden, that is ſplit or ſunk by the indiſcretion of her ſteer-men, *Thy rowers have* themſelves *brought thee into great* and dangerous *waters*; the governors of the city, and thoſe that had the management of their publick affairs, by ſome miſmanagement or other involved them in that war with the Chaldeans, which was the ruin of their ſtate; by their inſolence, by ſome affront given to the Chaldeans, or ſome attempt made upon them in confidence of their own ability to contend with them, they provoked Nebuchadnezzar to make a deſcent upon them, and by their obſtinacy, in ſtanding it out to the laſt, enraged him to that degree that he determined the ruin of their ſtate; and, *like an eaſt wind*, *broke them in the midſt of the ſeas.* Note, It is ill with a people when thoſe that ſit at the ſtern inſtead of putting them into the harbour run them a-ground.

2. How great and general the ruin will be. All her wealth ſhall be buried with her, *her riches*, *her fairs*, *and her merchandiſe*, ver. 27. all that had any dependence upon her, and dealings with her, in trade, in war, in converſation, they ſhall all *fall with her into the midſt of the ſeas in the day of her ruin.* Note, Thoſe who make creatures their confidence, place their happineſs in their intereſt in them, and reſt their hopes upon them

them, will of course fall with them; *happy* therefore *are they that have the God of Jacob for their help*, and *whose hope is in the Lord their God*, who lives for ever.

3. What sad lamentation would be made for the destruction of Tyre. The pilots, her princes and governors, when they see how ill they have played their cards, and how much they have contributed to their own ruin, shall *cry out* so loud as to make even the *suburbs shake*, ver. 28. such a vexation shall it be to them to reflect upon their own ill conduct. The inferior officers, that were as the mariners of the state, shall be forced to come down from their respective posts, *ver.* 29. and they shall *cry out against thee*, as having deceived them, in not proving so well able to hold out, as they thought thou hadst been; they shall *cry bitterly* for the common ruin, and their own share in it. They shall use all the most solemn expressions of grief; they shall *cast dust on their heads*, in indignation of themselves, shall *wallow themselves in ashes*, as having bid a final farewel to all ease and pleasure; they shall *make themselves bald*, ver. 31. with *tearing their hair*: and, according to the custom of great mourners, they shall *gird themselves with sackcloth*, who used to wear fine linen; and instead of merry songs, they shall *weep with bitterness of heart*. Note, Losses and crosses are very grievous and hard to be born, to those that have long been wallowing in pleasure, and sleeping in carnal security.

4. How Tyre should be upbraided with her former honour and prosperity, *ver.* 32, 33. She that was Tyrus the *renowned*, shall now be called *Tyrus the destroyed* in the *midst of the sea*. *What city is like Tyre?* Did ever any city come down from such a height of prosperity, to such a depth of adversity? Time was when *thy wares*, those of thine own making, and those that passed through thy hands, *went forth out of the seas*, and were exported to all parts of the world, then *thou filledst many people*, and didst *enrich the kings of the earth*, and their kingdoms. The Tyrians, tho' they bear such a sway in trade, yet it seems were fair merchants, and let their neighbours not only live but thrive by them. All that dealt with them were gainers; they did not cheat or oppress the people, but did enrich them with *the multitude of their merchandise*. But now they that used to be enriched by thee, shall be ruined with thee, as is usual in trade; *ver.* 34. *When thou shalt be broken*, and all thou hast is seized on, *all thy company shall fall too*. There is an end of Tyre that made such a noise and bustle in the world. This great blaze goes out in a snuff.

5. How the fall of Tyre should be matter of terror to some, and laughter to others, according as they were differently interested and affected. Some shall be *sore afraid*, and shall *be troubled*, ver. 35. concluding it will be their own turn to fall next. Others shall *hiss at her*, ver. 36. shall ridicule her pride, and vanity, and ill conduct, and think her ruin just. She triumphed in Jerusalem's fall, and there are those that will triumph in her's. When God casts his judgments on the sinner, *men also shall clap their hands at him*, and *shall hiss him out of his place*, Job xxvii. 22, 23. *Is this the city which men called the perfection of beauty?*

CHAP. XXVIII.

In this chapter we have, (1.) *A prediction of the fall and ruin of the king of Tyre, who in the destruction of that city is particularly set up as a mark for God's arrows,* ver. 1—10. (2.) *A lamentation for the king of Tyre, when he is thus fallen, tho' he falls by his own iniquity,* ver. 11—19. (3.) *A prophecy of the destruction of Zidon, which was in the neighbourhood of Tyre, and had a dependence upon it,* ver. 20—23. (4.) *A promise of the restoration of the Israel of God, tho' in the day of their calamity they were insulted over by their neighbours,* ver. 24—26.

1. THE word of the LORD came again unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, say unto the prince of Tyrus, Thus saith the Lord GOD, Because thine heart *is* lifted up, and thou hast said, I *am* a god, I sit *in* the seat of God, in the midst of the seas; yet thou *art* a man, and not God, though thou set thine heart as the heart of God: 3. Behold, thou *art* wiser than Daniel; there is no secret that they can hide from thee: 4. With thy wisdom, and with thine understanding thou hast gotten thee riches, and hast gotten gold and silver into thy treasures: 5. By thy great wisdom, *and* by thy traffick hast thou increased thy riches, and thine heart is lifted up because of thy riches: 6. Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Because thou hast set thine heart as the heart of God; 7. Behold, therefore, I will bring strangers upon thee, the terrible of the nations: and they shall draw their swords against the beauty of thy wisdom, and they shall defile thy brightness. 8. They shall bring thee down to the pit, and thou shalt die the deaths of *them that are* slain in the midst of the seas. 9. Wilt thou yet say before him that slayeth thee, I *am* God? but thou *shalt be* a man and no God in the hand of him that slayeth thee. 10. Thou shalt die the deaths of the uncircumcised, by the hand of strangers: for I have spoken *it*, saith the Lord GOD.

We have done with Tyrus in the foregoing chapter, but now the prince of Tyrus is to be singled out from the rest; here is something to be said to him by himself; a *message to him from God*, which the prophet must send him, whether he will hear, or whether he will forbear.

1. He must tell him of his pride. His people were proud, *chap.* xxvii. 3. and so is he; and they shall both be made to know that *God resists the proud*. Let us see,

(1.) What were the expressions of his pride. *His heart was lifted up*, ver. 2. He had a great conceit of himself, was blown up with an opinion of his own sufficiency, and looked with disdain upon all about him; and out of the abundance of the pride of his heart, he said *I am a god*: he did not only say it in his heart, but had the impudence to speak it out. God has said of princes *they are gods*, Psal. lxxxii. 6. But it doth not become them to say so of themselves; it is a high affront to him who is *God alone*, and will not give his glory to another. He thought the city of Tyre had as necessary a dependence upon him, as the world has upon the God that made it; and that he was himself independent as God, and unaccountable to any. He thought himself to have as much wisdom and strength as God himself, and as inconteſtable an authority, and that his prerogatives were as absolute, and his word as much a law as the word of God. He challenged divine honours, and expected to be praised and admired as a god, and doubted not to be *deified* among other heroes, after his death as a great benefactor to the world. Thus the king of Babylon said, *I will be like the most High*, Isa. xiv. 14. not like the most Holy. *I am the strong God*, and therefore will not be *contradicted*, because I cannot be *controlled*. *I sit in the seat of God*; I sit *as high* as God, my throne equal with his; *Divisum imperium cum Jove Cæsar habet*. I sit *as safe* as God, as safe *in the heart of the seas*, and as far out of the reach of danger, as he in the *height of heaven*. He thinks his guards of men of war about his throne as pompous and potent as the hosts of angels that are about the throne of God. He is put in mind of his meanness and mortality, and since he needs to be told he shall be told that self-evident truth, *thou art a man, and not God*, a depending creature, a dying creature, thou art *flesh and not spirit*, Isa. xxxi. 3. Note, Men must be made to know that they are *but men*, Psal. ix. 20. The greatest wits, the greatest potentates, the greatest saints, are *men and not gods*; Jesus Christ was both God and man. The king of Tyre tho' he has such a mighty influence upon all about him, and with the help of his riches bears a mighty sway, tho' he has tribute and presents brought to his court, with as much devotion as if they were sacrifices to his altar, tho' he is flattered by his courtiers, and made a god of by his poets, yet after all he is *but a man*, he knows it, he fears it; but *he sets his heart as the heart of God*, hast conceited thy self to be a god, hast compared thy self with God, thinking thy self as wise and strong and as fit to govern the world as he. It was the ruin of our first parents, and ours in them, that they would be *as gods*, Gen. iii. 5. And still that corrupt nature which inclines men to set up themselves as their own masters to do what they will, and their own carvers to have what they will, their own end to live to themselves, and their own felicity to enjoy themselves, *set their hearts as the heart of God*, invades his prerogatives, and catches at the flowers of his crown, a presumption that cannot go unpunished.

2. We are here told what it was that he was proud of.

1. His wisdom. It is likely this prince of Tyre was a man of very good natural parts, a philosopher, and well read in all the parts of learning that were then in vogue, however a politician, and had a great dexterity in managing the affairs of state. And then he thought himself *wiser than Daniel*, ver. 3. we found before that Daniel tho' now but a young man, was celebrated for his prevalency and prayer, *chap.* xiv. 14. Here we find he was famous for his prudence, in the management of the affairs of this world, a great scholar and statesman, and withal a great saint; and yet not a prince, but a poor captive. It was strange that under such external disadvantages his lustre should shine forth, so as that he was become *wise to a proverb*. When the king of Tyre dreams himself to be *a god*, he saith he is *wiser than Daniel. There is no secret that they can hide from thee.* Probably he challenged all about him to *prove him with questions*, as Solomon was proved, and he had unriddled all their ænigmas, had solved all their problems, and none of them all could puzzle him: he had perhaps been successful in discovering plots, and diving into the counsels of the neighbouring princes, and therefore thought himself omniscient, and that no thought could be

witholden from him; therefore he said, *I am a god.* Note, *Knowledge puffeth up*; it is hard to know much, and not to know it too well, and to be elevated with it. He that was *wiser than Daniel* was prouder than Lucifer. Those therefore that are knowing must study to be humble, and to evidence that they are so.

2. His *wealth.* That way his wisdom led him; it is not said that *by his wisdom* he searched into the arcana, either of nature or government, modelled the state better than it was, or made better laws, or had advanced the interests of the commonwealth of learning, but his *wisdom and understanding* were of use to him in *traffick*; as some of the kings of Judah *loved husbandry*, 2 Chron. xxvi. 10. so the king of Tyre loved merchandise, and by it he *got riches, increased his riches, and filled his treasures with gold and silver*, ver. 4, 5. See what the wisdom of this world is, those are cried up as the wisest men that know how to get money, and by right or wrong to raise estates, and yet really *this their way is their folly*, Psal. xlix. 13. It was the folly of the king of Tyre, (1.) That he attributed the increase of his wealth to himself, and not to the providence of God, forgetting him who *gave him power to get wealth*, Deut. viii. 17, 18. (2.) That he therefore thought himself a *wise man*; because he was a *rich man*; whereas a fool may *have* an estate, *Eccl.* ii. 19. yea, and a fool may *get* an estate, for the world has been often observed to favour such, *when bread is not to the wise*, Eccl. ix. 11. (3.) That *his heart was lifted up because of his riches*; for the increase of his wealth that made him so haughty and secure, so insolent and imperious, and that *set his heart as the heart of God.* The *man of sin*, when he had a great deal of worldly pomp and power, *shewed himself as a god*, 2 Thess. ii. 4. Those who are rich in this world have therefore need to charge that upon themselves, which the word of God chargeth upon them, *that they be not high-minded*, 1 Tim. vi. 17.

(2.) Since *pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall*, he must tell him of that *destruction*, of that *fall*, which was now hastning on, as the just punishment of his presumption in setting up himself a rival with God. Because thou hast pretended to be a god, *ver.* 6. therefore thou shalt not be long a man, *ver.* 7. Observe here,

1. The instruments of his destruction. *I will bring strangers upon thee*, the Chaldeans whom we do not find mentioned among the many nations and countries that traded with Tyre, *chap.* xxvii. If any of those nations had been brought against it, they would have had some compassion upon it for old acquaintance sake, but these *strangers* will have none; they are people of a *strange language*, which the king of Tyre himself, as wise as he is, perhaps understands not. They are the *terrible of the nations*; it was an army made up of *many nations*, and it was at this day the most *formidable*, both for strength and fury. These God has at command, and these he will bring upon the king of Tyre.

2. The extremity of the destruction. *They shall draw their swords against the beauty of thy wisdom*, ver. 7. *i. e.* against all those things which thou glorieſt in as thy beauty, and the product of thy wisdom. Note, It is just with God that our enemies should make that *their prey*, which we have made our *pride.* The king of Tyre's palace, his treasury, his city, his navy, his army, these he glories in as *his brightness*, these he thinks make him illustrious, and glorious as *a god* on earth. But all these the victorious enemy shall *defile*, shall deface, shall deform; he thought them sacred, things that none durst touch, but the conquerors shall seize them as common things, and spoil the *brightness* of them. But whatever comes of what he has, surely his person is sacred; no, *ver.* 8. *They shall bring thee down to the pit*, to the grave; thou shalt *die the death.* And, (1.) It shall not be an *honourable* death, but an *ignominious* one. He shall be so *vilified* in his death, as that he may despair of being *deified* after his death. He shall die *the deaths of them that are slain in the midst of the seas*, that have no honour done them at their death, but their dead bodies are immediately thrown over-board without any ceremony, as marks of distinction, to be a feast for the fish. Tyre is *like to be destroyed in the midst of the sea*, chap. xxvii. 32. and the prince of Tyre shall fare no better than the people. (2.) It shall not be a *happy* death, but a *miserable* one; he shall *die the deaths of the uncircumcised*, ver. 10. of those that are strangers to God, and not in covenant with him, and therefore die under his wrath and curse. It is *deaths*, a double death, temporal and eternal, the death both of body and soul. He shall die the *second death*, that is dying miserably indeed. The sentence of death here passed upon the king of Tyre, is ratified by a divine authority, *I have spoken it, saith the Lord God.* And what he hath said he will do. None can *gainsay* it, nor will he unsay it.

3. The effectual disproof that this will be of all his pretensions to deity, *ver.* 9. when the conqueror sets his sword to thy breast, and thou seest no way of escape, *Wilt thou then say, I am God?* Wilt thou then have such a conceit of thy self, and such a confidence in thy self, as thou now hast? No, thy being overpowered by death, and by the fear of it, will force thee to own that thou art not *a god*, but a weak, timorous, trembling, dying man. *In the hand of him that slayeth thee*, in the hand of God, and of the instruments that he employed, *thou shalt be a man, and not God*, utterly unable to resist and help thy self. *I have said ye are gods, but ye shall die like men*, Psal. lxxxii. 6, 7. Note, Those who pretend to be rivals with God shall be forced one way or other to let fall their claims. Death at furthest, when we come into his hand, will make us know that we are men.

11. ¶ Moreover, the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 12. Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Thou sealest up the sum full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. 13. Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone *was* thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee, in the day that thou wast created. 14. Thou *art* the anointed cherub that covereth: and I have set thee *so*; thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. 15. Thou *wast* perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee. 16. By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. 17. Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee. 18. Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffick; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth, in the sight of all them that behold thee. 19. All they that know thee among the people, shall be astonished at thee: thou shalt be a terror, and never *shalt* thou *be* any more.

As after the prediction of the ruin of Tyre, *chap.* xxvi. followed a pathetical lamentation for it, *chap.* xxvii. so after the ruin of the *king of Tyre is foretold, it is bewailed.*

1. This is commonly understood of the present prince of Tyre, spoken to *ver.* 2. His name was Ethbaal, or Ithobalus, as Diodorus Siculus calls him that was king of Tyre, when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed it. He was it seems upon all external accounts an *accomplished* man, very great and famous, but his iniquity was his ruin. Many expositors have suggested, that besides the literal sense of this lamentation there is an allegory in it, and that it is an allusion to the fall of the angels that sinned, who undid themselves by their pride. And (as is usual in texts that have a mystical meaning) some passages here refer primarily to the king of Tyre, as that of his merchandises, others to the angels, as that of being *in the holy mountain of God.* But if there be any thing mystical in it (as perhaps there may) I shall rather refer it to the fall of Adam, which seems to be glanced at, *ver.* 13. *Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God, and that in the day thou wast created.*

(2.) Some think by *the king of Tyre* is meant the whole royal family, *this* including also the foregoing kings, and looking as far back, as Hiram king of Tyre. The present governor is called *prince*, ver. 2. but he that is here lamented is called *king.* The court of Tyre, and its kings, had for many ages been famous. But sin ruins it.

Now we may observe two things here,

1. What was *the renown* of the king of Tyre. He is here spoken of as having lived in great splendor, *ver.* 12—15. He was *a man*, but it is here owned that he was a very considerable man, and one that made a mighty figure in his day. (1.) He far exceeded other men; Hiram and other kings of Tyre had done so in their time; and the present king perhaps had not come short of any of them. *Thou sealest up the sum full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty:* both the powers of human nature, and the prosperity of human life, seemed in him to have been at the highest pitch. He was looked upon to be as wise as the reason of men could make him, and as happy as the wealth of this world, and the enjoyment of it, could make him; in him you might see the utmost that both could do; and therefore *seal up the sum,* for nothing can be added: he is a compleat man, perfect *in suo genere.* (2.) He seemed to be as wise and happy as Adam in innocency, *ver.* 13. *Thou hast been in Eden,* even *in the garden of God,* thou hast lived as it were *in paradise* all thy days, hast had a full enjoyment of every thing that is *good for food,* or *pleasant*

ſant to the eyes; and an uncontroverted dominion over all about thee, as Adam had. One inſtance of the magnificence of the king of Tyre, is, that he *out-did* all other princes in jewels, which thoſe have the moſt plenty of, that trade moſt abroad, as he did. *Every precious ſtone* was *his covering*. There is a great variety of precious ſtones, but he had of *every ſort*; and in ſuch plenty, that beſides what were treaſured up in his cabinet, and were the ornaments of his crown, he had his clothes *trimmed* with them; they were his *covering*: nay, *ver.* 14. he *walked up and down in the midſt of the ſtones of fire*, i. e. theſe precious ſtones which glittered, and ſparkled like fire. His rooms were in a manner ſet round with jewels, ſo that he *walked* in the midſt of them, and then fancied himſelf as glorious as if, like God, he had been ſurrounded by ſo many angels, who are compared to a *flame of fire*. And if he be ſuch an admirer of precious ſtones as to think them *as bright as angels*, no wonder he is ſuch an admirer of himſelf, as to think himſelf *as great as God*. Nine ſeveral ſorts of precious ſtones are here named, which were all in the high-prieſt's ephod. Perhaps they are particularly named becauſe he in his pride uſed to ſpeak particularly of them, and tell thoſe about him, with a great deal of fooliſh pleaſure, this is ſuch a precious ſtone; of ſuch a value, and ſo and ſo are its virtues. Thus is he upbraided with his vanity. *Gold* is mentioned laſt, as far inferior in value to thoſe *precious ſtones*; and he uſed to ſpeak of it accordingly. Another thing that made him think his palace a paradiſe was the curious muſick he had, the *tabrets and pipes*, hand-inſtruments and wind-inſtruments; the *workmanſhip* of theſe was extraordinary, and they were prepared for him on purpoſe; prepared *in thee*, the pronoun is feminine, *in thee*, O Tyre; or it notes that the king was effeminate in doting on ſuch things. They were prepared *in the day he was created*, i. e. either born or created king; they were made on purpoſe to celebrate the joys either of his birth-day, or his coronation-day. Theſe he prided himſelf much in, and would have all that came to ſee his palace take notice of them. (3.) He looked like an incarnate angel, *ver.* 14. *Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth* or *protecteth*; *i. e.* He looked upon himſelf as a guardian angel to his people, ſo bright, ſo ſtrong, ſo faithful; *appointed* to their office, and *qualified* for it; anointed kings ſhould be to their ſubjects, as *anointed cherubims* that *cover* them with the wings of their power; and when they are ſuch, God will own them; their advancement was from him, *I have ſet thee ſo*. Some think becauſe mention was made of Eden, that it refers to the cherub ſet on the eaſt of Eden, to cover it, *Gen.* iii. 24. He thought himſelf as able to guard his city from all invaders, as that angel was for his charge. Or, it may refer to the cherubim in the moſt holy place, whoſe wings *covered* the ark, he thought himſelf as bright as one of them. (4.) He appeared in as much ſplendor as the high-prieſt when he was clothed with his garments for glory and beauty. *Thou waſt upon the holy mountain of God*, as preſident of the temple, built on that holy mountain; thou didſt look as great and with as much majeſty and authority as ever the high-prieſt did when he walked in the temple which was *garniſhed with precious ſtones*, 2 Chron. iii. 6. and had his habit on, which had precious ſtones both in the breaſt, and on the ſhoulders; in that he ſeemed to *walk in the midſt of the ſtones of fire*. Thus glorious is the king of Tyre; at leaſt he thinks himſelf ſo.

2. Let us now ſee what was *the ruin* of the king of Tyre, what it was that ſtained his glory, and laid all this honour in the duſt, *ver.* 15. *Thou waſt perfect in thy ways*, i. e. Thou didſt proſper in all thy affairs, and every thing went well with thee; thou hadſt not only a *clear* but a *bright* reputation, *from the day thou waſt created*, the day of thine acceſſion to the throne, *till iniquity was found in thee*; and that ſpoiled all. This may perhaps allude to the deplorable caſe of the angels that fell, and of our firſt parents, both which were *perfect in their ways till iniquity was found in them*. And when iniquity was once *found in him*, it increaſed, he grew worſe and worſe; as appears, *ver.* 18 *Thou haſt defiled thy ſanctuaries*, i. e. Thou haſt loſt the benefit of all that which thou thoughteſt ſacred, and in which, as in a ſanctuary, thou thoughteſt to take refuge; theſe thou haſt *defiled*, and ſo expoſed thy ſelf *by the multitude of thine iniquities*. Now obſerve,

1. What the iniquity was that was the ruin of the king of Tyre. (1.) The *iniquity of his traffick*, ſo it is called, *ver.* 18. both his and his peoples, for their ſin is charged upon him, becauſe he connived at it, and ſet them an ill example, *ver.* 16. *By the multitude of thy merchandiſe they have filled the midſt of thee with violence*, and thus *thou haſt ſinned*. The king had ſo much to do with his merchandiſe, and was ſo wholly intent upon the gains of that, that he took no care to do juſtice, to right thoſe that ſuffered wrong, and to protect them from *violence*: nay, in the multiplicity of buſineſs wrong was done to many *by overſight*; and in his dealings he made uſe of his power to *invade the rights* of thoſe he dealt with. Note, Thoſe that have much to do in the world are in great danger of doing much amiſs; and it is hard to deal with many without *violence* to ſome. Trades are called myſteries; but too many make them myſteries of iniquity. (2.) His *pride* and *vain-glory*, ver. 17. *Thine heart was lifted up becauſe of thy beauty*, thou waſt in love with thy ſelf, and thy own ſhadow. And thus *thou haſt corrupted thy wiſdom by reaſon of the brightneſs*, and the pomp and ſplendor wherein thou livedſt. He gazed ſo much upon this, that it dazzled his eyes, and made him he could not ſee his way. He appeared ſo puffed up with his greatneſs, that it both loſt him his wiſdom, and loſt him the reputation of it. He really became a *fool in glorying*. Thoſe make a bad bargain for themſelves that part with their wiſdom for the gratifying of their gaiety, and to pleaſe a vain humour loſe a real excellency.

2. What the ruin was that this iniquity brought him to. (1.) He was thrown out of his dignity, and diſlodged from his palace, which he took to be his paradiſe, and temple, *ver.* 16. *I will caſt thee as profane out of the mountain of God*. His kingly power was high as a *mountain*, ſetting him above others; it was a *mountain of God*, for the powers that be are ordained of God, and have ſomething in them that is ſacred; but having abuſed his power, he is reckoned profane, and is therefore depoſed and expelled; he diſgraceth the crown he wears, and ſo has forfeited it, and ſhall be deſtroyed *from the midſt of the ſtones of fire*, the precious ſtones with which his palace was *garniſhed*, as the temple was; and they ſhall be no protection to him. (2.) He was expoſed to contempt and diſgrace, and trampled upon by his neighbours. *I will caſt thee to the ground*, ver. 17. will caſt thee among the *pavement ſtones*, from the midſt of the *precious ſtones*, and will *lay thee* a rueful ſpectacle *before kings that they may behold thee*, and take warning by thee not to be proud and oppreſſive. (3.) He was quite conſumed; his city and he in it. *I will bring forth a fire from the midſt of thee*. The conquerors, when they have plundered the city, will kindle a fire in the heart of it, which ſhall lay it and the palace particularly in aſhes. Or, it may be taken more generally for the fire of God's judgments, which ſhall devour both prince and people, and bring all the glory of both *to aſhes upon the earth*; and this fire ſhall be *brought forth from the midſt of thee*. All God's judgments upon ſinners take riſe from themſelves; they are *devoured* by a fire of their own kindling. (4.) He was hereby made a terrible example of divine vengeance. Thus he is reduced *in the ſight of all them that behold him*, ver. 18. *they that know him ſhall be aſtoniſhed at him*, and ſhall admire how one that ſtood *ſo high* could be brought *ſo low*. The king of Tyre's palace, like the temple at Jeruſalem, when it is deſtroyed, ſhall be *an aſtoniſhment and a hiſſing*, 2 Chron. vii. 20, 21. So fell the king of Tyre.

20. ¶ Again the word of the LORD came unto me, ſaying, 21. Son of man, ſet thy face againſt Zidon, and propheſy againſt it, 22. And ſay, Thus ſaith the Lord GOD, Behold, I *am* againſt thee, O Zidon, and I will be glorified in the midſt of thee: and they ſhall know that I *am* the LORD, when I ſhall have executed judgments in her, and ſhall be ſanctified in her. 23. For I will ſend into her, peſtilence, and blood into her ſtreets, and the wounded ſhall be judged in the midſt of her by the ſword upon her on every ſide; and they ſhall know that I *am* the LORD. 24. ¶ And there ſhall be no more a pricking brier unto the houſe of Iſrael, nor *any* grieving thorn of all *that are* round about them that deſpiſed them, and they ſhall know that I *am* the Lord GOD. 25. Thus ſaith the Lord GOD, When I ſhall have gathered the houſe of Iſrael from the people among whom they are ſcattered, and ſhall be ſanctified in them in the ſight of the heathen, then ſhall they dwell in their land that I have given to my ſervant Jacob. 26. And they ſhall dwell ſafely therein, and ſhall build houſes, and plant vineyards: yea, they ſhall dwell with confidence when I have executed judgments upon all thoſe that deſpiſe them round about them, and they ſhall know that I *am* the LORD their God.

God's glory is his great end, both in all the *good*, and in all the *evil* which *proceedeth out of the mouth of the moſt High*; ſo we find in theſe verſes,

1. God will be glorified in the deſtruction of Zidon; a city that lay near to Tyre, was more ancient, but not ſo conſiderable, had a dependence upon it, and ſtood and fell with it. God ſaith here, *I am againſt thee, O Zidon, and I will be glorified in the midſt of thee*, ver. 22. And again, they that would not know by gentler methods ſhall be made to *know that I am the Lord*, and I alone; and that I am a juſt and jealous God, *when I ſhall have executed judgments in her*, deſtroying judgments, when I ſhall have done execution according to juſtice, and according to the ſentence paſſed, and ſo ſhall be *ſanctified in her*. The Zidonians it ſhould ſeem were more addicted to idolatry than the Tyrians were, who being men of buſineſs and large converſation, were leſs under the power of bigottry and ſuperſtition; the Zidonians were noted for the worſhip of Aſhtaroth; Solomon introduced it, 1 *Kings* xi. 5. Jezebel

was daughter to the king of Zidon, who brought the worſhip of Baal into Iſrael, 1 *Kings* xvi. 31. ſo that God had been much diſhonoured by the Zidonians. Now, ſaith he, *I will be glorified, I will be ſanctified.* The Zidonians were borderers upon the land of Iſrael, where God was known, and where they might have got the knowledge of him, and have learned to glorify him; but inſtead of that they ſeduced Iſrael to the worſhip of their idols. Note, When God is ſanctified he is glorified; for his holineſs is his glory; and thoſe whom he is not ſanctified and glorified *by*, he will be ſanctified and glorified *upon*, by *executing judgments* upon them, which ſpeak him a juſt avenger of his own and his peoples injured honour.

The judgments that ſhall be executed upon Zidon are *war* and *peſtilence*, two waſting depopulating judgments, *ver.* 23. They are God's meſſengers which he *ſends* on his errands, and they ſhall *accompliſh* that for which he *ſends them. Peſtilence* and *blood* ſhall be ſent *into her ſtreets*, there the dead bodies of thoſe ſhall lie who periſhed ſome by the plague, occaſioned perhaps through ill diet when the city was beſieged, and ſome by the ſword of the enemy, moſt likely the Chaldean armies, when the city is taken, and all put to the ſword. Thus the wounded ſhall be *judged*, when they are dying of their wounds they ſhall judge themſelves, and others ſhall ſay they juſtly fall; or, as ſome read it, *they ſhall be puniſhed by the ſword*, that ſword which has commiſſion to deſtroy *on every ſide*. It is God that judgeth, and he will overcome.

Nor is it Tyre and Zidon only on which God would *execute judgments*, but on all thoſe that deſpiſed his people Iſrael, and triumphed in their calamities, *ver.* 26. for this was now God's controverſy with the nations that were *round about them*, ver. 26. Note, When God's people are under his correcting hand for their faults, he takes care, as he did concerning malefactors that were ſcourged, *that they ſhall not ſeem vile* to thoſe that are about them, and therefore takes it ill at thoſe who deſpiſe them, and ſo *help forward the affliction* when he is but *a little diſpleaſed*, Zech. i. 15. God *regards* them even in their low eſtate, and therefore let not men *deſpiſe* them.

2. God will be glorified in the reſtoration of his people to their former ſafety and proſperity. God had been diſhonoured by the ſins of his people, and their ſufferings too had given occaſion to the enemy to blaſpheme, *Iſa.* lii. 5. but God will now both cure them of their ſins, and eaſe them of their troubles, and ſo *will be ſanctified in them, in the ſight of the heathen*, will recover the honour of his holineſs, to the ſatisfaction of all the world, *ver.* 25. For,

1. They ſhall return to the poſſeſſion of their own land again. *I will gather the houſe of Iſrael*, out of their diſperſions, in anſwer to that prayer, *Pſal.* cvi. 47. *Save us, O Lord our God, and gather us from among the heathen.* And in purſuance of that promiſe, *Deut.* xxx. 4. thence will *the Lord thy God gather thee.* Being *gathered*, they ſhall be brought in a body to *dwell in the land that I have given to my ſervant Jacob.* God had an eye to the ancient grant, in bringing them back, for that remained in force, and the diſcontinuance of the poſſeſſion was not a defeaſance of the right. He that gave it will again give it.

2. They ſhall enjoy great tranquillity there. When thoſe that had been vexatious to them are taken off, they ſhall live in quietneſs; there ſhall be no more *a pricking brier, or a grieving thorn*, ver. 24. They ſhall have a happy *ſettlement*, for they ſhall *build houſes*, and *plant vineyards*; and they ſhall enjoy a happy *ſecurity* and *ſerenity* there; they ſhall *dwell ſafely*, ſhall *dwell with confidence*, and there ſhall be none to diſquiet them, or make them afraid, *ver.* 26. This never had a full acccompliſhment in the body of that people, for after their return out of captivity, they were ever and anon moleſted by ſome ill neighbour or other. Nor has the goſpel church been ever quite free from *pricking briers* and *grieving thorns*; yet ſometimes *the church has reſt*; believers always dwell ſafely under the divine protection, and may be *quiet from the fear of evil.* But the full accompliſhment of this promiſe is reſerved for the heavenly Canaan, when all the ſaints ſhall be gathered together, and every thing *that offends* ſhall be removed, and all griefs and fears for ever baniſhed.

CHAP. XXIX.

Three chapters we had concerning Tyre and its king, next follows four chapters concerning Egypt and its king. This is the firſt of them; Egypt had formerly been a houſe of bondage to God's people; of late they had had but too friendly a correſpondence with it, and had depended too much upon it, and therefore whether the prediction reached Egypt or no, it would be of uſe to Iſrael, to take them off from their confidence in their alliance with it. The prophecies againſt Egypt which are all laid together in theſe four chapters were of five ſeveral dates; the firſt in the 10th year of the captivity, ver. 1. *The 2d in the 27th*, ver. 17. *The 3d in the 11th year and the firſt month*, chap. xxx. 20. *The 4th in the 11th year and the third month*, chap. xxxi. 1. *The 5th in the 12th year*, chap. xxxii. 1. *and another the ſame year*, ver. 17. *In this chapter we have*, (1.) *The deſtruction of Pharaoh foretold, for his dealing deceitfully with Iſrael*, ver. 1—7. (2.) *The deſolation of the land of Egypt foretold, ver.* 8—12. (3.) *A promiſe of the reſtoration thereof in part after* 40 *years*, ver. 13—16. (4.) *The poſſeſſion that ſhould be given to Nebuchadnezzar of the land of Egypt*, ver. 17—20. (5.) *A promiſe of mercy to Iſrael*, ver. 21.

1. IN the tenth year, in the tenth *month*, in the twelfth *day* of the month, the word of the LORD came unto me, ſaying, 2. Son of man, ſet thy face againſt Pharaoh king of Egypt, and propheſy againſt him, and againſt all Egypt. 3. Speak and ſay, Thus ſaith the Lord GOD, Behold, I *am* againſt thee, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great dragon that lieth in the midſt of his rivers, which hath ſaid, My river *is* mine own, and I have made *it* for my ſelf. 4. But I will put hooks in thy chaws, and I will cauſe the fiſh of thy rivers to ſtick unto thy ſcales, and I will bring thee up out of the midſt of thy rivers, and all the fiſh of thy rivers ſhall ſtick unto thy ſcales. 5. And I will leave thee *thrown* into the wilderneſs, thee and all the fiſh of thy rivers: thou ſhalt fall upon the open fields, thou ſhalt not be brought together, nor gathered: I have given thee for meat to the beaſts of the field, and to the fowls of the heaven. 6. And all the inhabitants of Egypt ſhall know that I *am* the LORD, becauſe they have been a ſtaff of reed to the houſe of Iſrael. 7. When they took hold of thee by thy hand, thou didſt break, and rent all their ſhoulder: and when they leaned upon thee, thou brakeſt, and madeſt all their loyns to be at a ſtand.

Here is, (1.) The date of this prophecy againſt Egypt. It was in the *tenth year of the captivity*, and yet it is placed after the prophecy againſt Tyre, which was delivered in the eleventh year, becauſe in the accompliſhment of the prophecies, the deſtruction of Tyre happened before the deſtruction of Egypt, and Nebuchadnezzar's gaining Egypt was the reward of his ſervice againſt Tyre; and therefore the prophecy againſt Tyre is put firſt, that we may the better obſerve that. But particular notice muſt be taken of this, that the firſt prophecy againſt Egypt was juſt at the time when the king of Egypt was coming to relieve Jeruſalem, and raiſe the ſiege, *Jer.* xxxvii. 5. but did not anſwer the expectations of the Jews from them. Note, It is good to foreſee the failing of all our creature-confidences, then when we are moſt in temptation to depend upon them; that we may *ceaſe from man.*

2. The ſcope of this prophecy. It is directed againſt *Pharaoh king of Egypt, and againſt all Egypt*, ver. 2. The prophecy againſt Tyre began with the people, and then proceeded againſt the prince. But this begins with the prince, becauſe it began to have its accompliſhment in the inſurrections and rebellions of the people againſt the prince not long after this.

3. The prophecy itſelf: Pharaoh Hophrah (for ſo was the preſent Pharaoh ſurnamed) is here repreſented by a *great dragon*, or crocodile, that *lies in the midſt of his rivers*, as Leviathan in the waters, to *play therein*, ver. 3. Nilus the river of Egypt was famed for crocodiles: And what is the king of Egypt in God's account but a *great dragon*, venomous and miſchievous. Therefore ſaith God, *I am againſt thee, I am above thee*; ſo it may be read. How high ſoever the princes and potentates of the earth are, there is a *higher than they*, Eccl. v. 8. a God *above* them that can controll them, and if they be tyrannical and oppreſſive, a God *againſt* them that will be free to reckon with them. Obſerve here,

1. The pride and ſecurity of Pharaoh. He *lies in the midſt of his rivers*, rolls himſelf with a great deal of ſatisfaction in his wealth and pleaſures: And he ſaith, *My river is my own*; he boaſts that he is an abſolute prince, his ſubjects are his vaſſals, Joſeph bought them long ago, *Gen.* xlvii. 23. That he is a ſole prince, and has neither partner in the government, nor competition for it; that he is out of debt, what he has is his *own*, and none of his neighbours has any demands upon him; that he is independent, neither tributary nor accountable to any. Note, Worldly carnal minds pleaſe themſelves with, and pride themſelves in, their property, forgetting that whatever we have, we have only the uſe of it, the property is in God, we ourſelves are not our own but his; our *tongues are not our own*, Pſal. xii. 4. Our river is not *our own*, for its ſprings are in God. The moſt potent prince cannot call what he has his *own*, for tho' it be ſo againſt all the world, it is not ſo againſt God. But Pharaoh's reaſon for his pretenſions is yet more abſurd; *my river is my own*, for *I have made it for myſelf.* Here he uſurps two of the divine prerogatives, to be the author and end of his own being and felicity; He only, that is the great Creator, can ſay of this world, and of every thing in it, *I have made it for myſelf.* He calls his river his *own*, becauſe he *looks not unto the maker thereof, nor has reſpect unto him that faſhioned it long ago*, Iſa. xxii. 11. What we have, we have received *from God*, and muſt uſe *for God*, ſo that we cannot ſay we *made it*, much leſs that we